

# Criminals Play Roles In Early Vigo History

Ts SEP 10 1972

By DOROTHY J. CLARK Community Affairs File

Between the years 1880 and 1887 there was perhaps no name more familiar to the local police than that of "Burglar Bill" Hicks. If he had been guilty of all the burglaries reputed to have been committed by him and had to suffer imprisonment for them he would undoubtedly have ended his days behind prison walls.

Bill was a very industrious, hard-working Negro who worked all day in the north rolling mill and robbed houses by night. In the early spring of 1881, about 4 o'clock one morning, A. Z. Foster was awakened by hearing somebody in his room. The Foster home was on South Fifth St. below Oak.

Springing from his bed he grappled with the intruder and a fast and fierce struggle ensued. Mr. Foster was no match for the burly burglar, however, and he got away, not until Mr. Foster had torn half of the wamus or shirt worn by the housebreaker.

The police were notified at once and the description given them left no doubt in their minds that the burglar was Hicks. Knowing the cunning of Hicks, the police determined to fasten him if possible. An officer was sent to his home with the half wamus which he exhibited to the burglar's wife, telling her an accident had happened at the rolling mill in which several men were killed and that the wamus had been taken from the body of a Negro so badly mangled as to be unrecognizable. She positively identified the garment as belonging to her husband and showed the officer where she had mended it with her own hands.

The officers then called at the rolling mill and placed Bill under arrest and after a hard-fought fight landed him in jail. His face bore the fresh scars from the battle with Mr. Foster.

His trial was finally called in the criminal court and a good strong case was made against him when Mr. Foster positively identified him. He was ably defended by John E. Lamb and Sanford C. Davis. To the utter amazement of everybody the jury returned a verdict of not guilty, and Hicks was turned loose upon the community to rob and plunder at will.

DOROTHY J.  
CLARK

The indignation of the people was such that Hicks shook the dust of the city from his feet and next turned up at Clay City, where he was engaged in his usual business and houses were reported robbed almost nightly.

Finally with the help of the Terre Haute police he was arrested and when searched the stolen goods were found upon him. He was tried at Brazil and sentenced to six years in prison. After serving his time he returned to this city and burglaries became as frequent as ever. Finally the police reached an understanding with Bill. He agreed to come to police headquarters every evening at 7:30, the police to furnish him with a bed in the basement and detail a policeman to see that he did not go

Continued On Page 11, Col. 3.

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



# Dorothy Clark

Continued From Page 4.

out. This arrangement stopped the burglaries, but since he was used to a more strenuous life he agreed to leave town, going to Chicago.

In 1890 he was caught in a house in Chicago, tried and convicted and sentenced to seven years. Returning to Chicago he opened up operations on railroad trains, robbing travelers. About the year 1896 he robbed a passenger and in getting off the train fell under it and lost a leg.

Bill visited Terre Haute several times and would always go to headquarters upon his arrival and inform the police of his presence and how long he intended to remain.

One of the most desperate and dangerous men ever placed behind the bars of the Vigo County Jail by the police was Ellsworth Wyatt, better known as "Zip" Wyatt, a member of the notorious

Dalton gang who was arrested Dec. 1, 1892.

Information was received by police that Wyatt was at the home of his uncle at Cory in Clay County. A posse of five officers left Terre Haute at midnight on Nov. 30th to capture him. About 4 o'clock in the morning they surrounded the house and Wyatt was captured without any trouble. Taken by surprise, he attempted to grab his pistols which he had placed on the fireplace mantel in his room, but the police forced him to surrender at gunpoint.

He was wanted for murder and other crimes of violence by authorities in Oklahoma and Kansas, but the Oklahoma sheriff arrived here first with the proper warrant and the prisoner was delivered to him. The following March, Wyatt broke jail and escaped. Seven months later he was killed while resisting arrest. Wyatt was about 33 years old, nearly six feet tall and built like an athlete. He was an excellent shot and was one of the chief lieutenants of the notorious Dalton gang.

Early crimes in this area

are too many to try to include in one column. One of the largest robberies was the larceny of over \$16,000 from the Adams Express Company in 1895. Horse thieves were plentiful through the turn of the century. Frank Edmonds, less than 21 years of age, ranked in the front row in 1900. He rarely stole from a hitching rack or a barn. Usually he would go to a livery stable and hire a rig. If it were a poor one, he would return it. If it were first class, he would keep on going and sell it.

Henry Underwood who kept the wagon yard at Second and Cherry in 1901 was a partner in crime with James M. Phillips who served time for horse stealing. Stolen horses would be brought to Underwood who dealt extensively in horses and was not suspected. One arrest brought about another until the entire gang was rounded up and the illegal horse traffic stopped.

In the history of local crime the case of the Fontanet train wreckers was a puzzle in 1894. Engineer John Mohrman and

## THE TRIBUNE-STAR, TERRE HAUTE

his fireman, Edward Fleck, were both killed in the wreck of the Big Four west-bound passenger train. Investigation showed that the switch had been tampered with and the accident was caused by train wreckers. Fontanet coal miners George Roberts and William Sourwine were found guilty of the crime and sentenced to eight and 10 years respectively. Roberts escaped in 1895 and was never recaptured.



# Stage Driver Recounts His Efforts to Testify

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Stage coach driver, Jerry C. Hidden, told of his experiences traveling by stage coach from Terre Haute to Indianapolis in the muddy spring of 1848 to testify at the trial of a man held for robbery from the U.S. mails.

"The robber's trial had been set for a Thursday morning at ten o'clock, and the Monday evening before, the sheriff notified me to be in Indianapolis without fail. It was too late to start then, so I took passage on a mail coach which left here at ten o'clock Tuesday night.

"The coaches at that time started from the old Stewart House on North 2nd St. When I went down in the evening I found I was the only passenger booked from here, but when the coach arrived there were three passengers from the West. Starting east on Main street we passed the Prairie House that stood on the site of the present Terre Haute House. This was the extreme edge of town.

"The road as far as the yellow bridge (19th St.) was good and there was a plank road to the foot of Blake's Hill (Highland Lawn Cemetery), but a mile east of that we struck it bad. The road was clay knee deep, and the horses made poor progress, dragging along for a short distance then stopping to rest.

"This became monotonous and I climbed out with my fellow passengers and started to tramp through the mud which came almost to our boot-tops. At first the exercise seemed a grateful change, but the night was dark, the trees grew close to the road on either hand, and the coach lamps with their sperm candles gave no great light, so we stumbled along endeavoring to see the humorous side of the situation. With wet feet and clothes plastered with mud we got into the swaying coach and tried to sleep. Our coats and boots steamed, the coach lurched every now and then, and sleep was impossible. Outside the horses splashed through the mud while the driver urged and encouraged them; inside we bemoaned the fact that we had no cigars to act as a solace."

"It was daylight when we reached Widow Cunningham's, a stage tavern three miles this side of Brazil. Here we had breakfast and changed drivers and horses.

After this relief we started out only to stall in a springy bit of ground just west of what was then the village of Brazil. Finding that it was impossible to extract the coach, the driver mounted one of his horses and set off for a farm at Otter Creek to get cattle to help haul it out. We walked on half a mile to a tavern and slept or amused ourselves best we might until dinner was ready. The driver appeared just about noon with a farmer and three yoke of oxen. With this aid the coach was dragged from the mire.



DOROTHY J.  
CLARK

## Dorothy Clark

Continued From Page 4.

we all felt more changes between Putnamville and Indianapolis—at Stylesville and Plainfield. With the good road and fresh horses we bowled along rapidly. It was eleven o'clock when we reached the stage tavern in Indianapolis and I hurried directly to the courthouse.

### No Good Humor

"The case had been called promptly at ten o'clock and set forward four weeks owing to my non-appearance. The judge was in no good humor and started a deputy sheriff to Terre Haute to find me. Endeavors to explain matters were unavailing, and I had to get Mr. Alvord, the general superintendent of the stage company, to go on my bond. For the next month I boarded at the Palmer House awaiting the day of the trial. When it came and the robber saw and recognized me, he pled guilty and received the limit of the law, 21 years."

"It was almost three o'clock when we again started and it took until ten o'clock that night to reach Manhattan, twelve miles beyond. It was another exhausting night which followed in the swaying, dimly lighted stage, and the black, cheerless road. When the first gray light was showing in the east, we changed horses at Putnamville, south of Greencastle, and had breakfast.

"From there the roads improved wonderfully and the day dawning bright and clear we all felt more cheerful."

Continued On Page 6, Col. 2.

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File



This interesting experience of Mr. Hidden's serves as a fair sample of the difficulties which were then accepted as a traveling public.

The regulation rate of ten cents a mile restricted stage travel to a more or less limited class. For the most part passengers were business and professional men; the former went east to buy goods and the latter west looking for locations. Men seeking investments and business agents of eastern firms were also frequent travelers. These commercial agents each represented two or three firms and made a trip west once or twice a year. Ladies traveling were usually accompanied by a masculine protector and seldom made journeys alone.

To the actual expense for transportation was added the cost of meals and lodging. While it was possible to sleep in transit and hurried or economically inclined individuals did, the custom was to stop for the night at some tavern and proceed the following day.

Each traveler was allowed 50 pounds of baggage and their luggage differed greatly from that of today. The small, oblong leather or hide trunks studded with brass nails, carpet bags and leather portmanteau would have been scant accommodation for the modern traveler's wardrobe.

The agent of the stage company at the starting point prepared a way-bill containing the name and destination of every passenger booked and the amount of fare paid. This was given to the driver and delivered by him to the landlord or agent at each station immediately upon arrival. He noted the names of any additional passengers and the time of the coach's arrival and departure. In spite of these precautions, taking the fare of way-passengers between booking points or "shouldering" as it was called, was not uncommon with drivers who looked out for their own profit rather than the company's welfare. Often a good-natured driver would give some weary and foot-sore traveler a lift out of kindness of heart. Travel began early in the spring and was heaviest in the fall of the year. Extra coaches were run whenever the regular ones were unable to handle the traffic and often four or five extras came through in a day.

#### Tri-Weekly Line

There were several lines of stages running from Terre Haute besides the great through lines east and west. Between Terre Haute, Vincennes and Evansville south, and Lafayette north, ran a tri-weekly line owned by Robert O'Brien of Vincennes.

There was also a tri-weekly line via Paris, Charleston and Shelbyville to Springfield. The latter was operated by the Great Western Stage Company which controlled the travel on the National Road between Columbus, Ohio, and St. Louis, and several other lines throughout Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Otho Hinton & Co., of Columbus were its proprietors.

Between the Great Western Stage Company and the lines owned by Frink & Walker of Chicago there grew up a tremendous rivalry. This was on account of a much desired contract held by the latter for carrying mails from Chicago to St. Louis.

Finally the Great Western underbid this firm and then began a furious contest for supremacy. The best horses were taken all along the line from as far east as Richmond and literally driven to death to beat the time of the rival company. Passengers on the stage arriving first at the destination were expected to pay fare, but the driver who brought his coach in second collected nothing. Horses would drop dead in the harness at the end of a trip and the finest stock belonging to both companies was used up. Often a driver would find such a quotation upon his way bill, "We furnish horses and whip and expect you to use them, kill every horse but don't let them pass you."

Feeling ran high and drivers resorted to unscrupulous tricks. Coming to a narrow place in the road when the racing coaches were close together, the leading driver would suddenly rein back and the team would dash into his rear boot with serious consequences to themselves but little damage to the coach.



west as late as 1900.

The largest coaches carried twelve passengers inside and two more could be accommodated on the driver's seat; the smaller had seats inside for nine. The bodies were swung from thick leather hinges called through braces, and swayed backwards and from side to side when in motion. According to old travelers this swaying motion was far from pleasant.

Behind each coach was a capacious boot, leather-covered, with a top flap that buckled down and locked. In this the baggage was carried or, in some cases, only the

through mails and remained locked until the end of the route. There was also a forward boot beneath the driver's seat and in that was carried the leather pouches containing the way mail, distributed and collected along the road.

Each coach was designated by a name and number borne above the door on their gaily painted panels. Some of those that once lumbered through the streets of early Terre Haute bore the following names: The Victoria, Columbus, Tippecanoe, Miami Maraposa, Buena Vista, Ceno Gorda, Red Bird and Prairie

Flower.

The coaches were changed every 150 or 160 miles, Richmond and Terre Haute being the transfer points in Indiana. On the north side of Cherry street between Third and Fourth streets, there was a repair shop belonging to the stage company. James Random, a wheelright, had his shop on Main Street between Fourth and Fifth streets. He repaired coaches and built the mud wagons used when the roads were bad.

Next week more about the stage drivers and their unusual experiences...

The coaches used through California in 1849 and saw and recognized this once popular and prosperous stage prior, a broken and dissipated man employed in Sacramento livery stable. The man seemed so great that Mr. Bell dissuaded a companion from claiming a reward of ten thousand dollars that had been offered for his capture. Shortly after this he died. After Hinton's failure and flight, Tulier, Alvord & Co. assumed the management of the Great Western Stage Co. and kept it until the lines were discontinued.

California in 1849 and saw and recognized this once popular and prosperous stage prior, a broken and dissipated man employed in Sacramento livery stable. The man seemed so great that Mr. Bell dissuaded a companion from claiming a reward of ten thousand dollars that had been offered for his capture. Shortly after this he died. After Hinton's failure and flight, Tulier, Alvord & Co. assumed the management of the Great Western Stage Co. and kept it until the lines were discontinued.

mer Recorder of Vigo County, a strange series of circumstances. John D. Bell, for-lected as mail contractor. By government which he had col- of dollars belonging to the ton absconded with thousands Hinton & Co. failed. Mr. Hin- and in October, 1846, Ohio Competition was too strong. the road. driving them off the side of passing the rear wheels and as a rival leaders were swinging the coach over just knavish practice, consisted in ahead. "Hauling" another

SUNDAY, OCT. 22, 1922



# Documents Tell of Rogues Gallery A Century Ago

By DOROTHY J. CLARK Ts JUL 8 1973

In looking over old documents concerning century-old crimes and criminals, I ran across the account of Henry A. F. Meisel, termed a "natural born thief" and one of the smoothest articles the police of Indiana and Illinois had to contend with in those days.

Meisel had a good education, was a veterinary surgeon and when it came to being "foxy" he had your grandpa beat a country mile. For years he stole about Terre Haute, but the police were unable to catch him. Horses and cattle would be missed, but when daylight came, Meisel would be at his place of business, and the cops would look elsewhere for the thief.

In 1870, when Col. Dan Fasig was chief of police here and Os Owens was chief in Paris, Ill., a grocery and general store at North Arm, in Edgar county, about five miles east of Paris, was robbed. It was a good-sized store, but it was simply looted. Everything of value was hauled away and the room left as empty as a "missionary's purse."

When Chief Owens reached the scene of the burglary there was no clue which would lead to the capture of the thief, and as it late in the day and other wagons had been moving, to track the wagon was out of the question. It was learned however, that the wagon which was at the store was a very "wide-tread," almost a foot wider than the ordinary wagon in use at that time. Attempts were made to track the wagon, and it was determined that it came to Terre Haute. It was in the winter, and in the mud, the officers were able to trace the tracks for a short distance, then they would be hidden among a hundred other wagon tracks.

Owens came to Terre Haute

and enlisted the aid of Chief Fasig, and the two began a search for that "wide-read" wagon. They walked up and down alleys and about the remote places of the city for a week, and finally gave word to the patrolmen. They also joined in the search, but were as luckless as the chiefs.

The search was finally given up and the robbery was almost forgotten.



DOROTHY J.  
CLARK

It was sometime in June that a fire broke out in the buildings at a brick-yard operated by a man named Brushner, in the southwest part of town. Two policemen hurried to the fire and in order to save the machinery, it was necessary to move it from one of the sheds. The officers joined in the work of rescue and the first thing they came to was an old wagon, and it had a very wide tread. Closer examination disclosed this wagon fit the description of the North Arm burglary and Chief Fasig went down to the brick yard to question Mr. Brushner. The old brick

maker said he had it made to haul brick because it would hold more than the ordinary wagon, but found it too heavy and only used it a short time. He insisted that he put it in the shed and that it was never out until it was hauled out at the fire.

While he was talking Mrs. Brushner interrupted and reminded her husband that it had been used once. It was recalled that he had hired the wagon to Henry Meisel to make a trip, and that Meisel had brought the wagon back early in the morning and put it back in the shed.

This was the first clue, and the officers lost time in going to Meisel's home on South Third and placing him and his wife under arrest. Meisel was placed in jail and his wife left at headquarters while the officers went and searched the house. They removed the floor of a porch at the back of the building and there found the stock from the North Arm store. Sugar, coffee, tea, tobacco and in fact most everything in the grocery and general store line were hidden there. In all, the goods invoiced over \$500. Meisel was taken to Illinois, convicted, and for the few succeeding years was in Joliet prison.

found with any horses and, of course, it was not believed he was guilty.

After he went to Clinton, Ill., he worked the peddling racket until one day a fine gray horse and Meisel were missing. The horse was located at Clinton, Ind. where Meisel had sold it to a man named Dudley. Later, Marshal Casey found Meisel and arrested him after a desperate fight. He was held in the calaboose until an officer from Illinois arrived and took him to jail over there.

While in jail Meisel sent for Chief Fasig, and offered to

After his release he came back to Terre Haute and started a peddling wagon. He would take a little tinware and drive out in the country, stay a week, and would come back leading a couple of cows or steers for which he would find an easy market.

At that time horses were permitted to run at large and as often as twice or three times a week, good horses would be reported strayed or stolen. Meisel was never

Continued On Page 6, Col. 4.

give valuable evidence if his prison term would be reduced. He told where horses could be found that he "strayed" from Terre Haute during the previous two years. This accounted for 29 of the missing horses and 25 of them were recovered.

It seems that while Meisel was in prison the first time he took up with a man from Bedford. They decided to work together. Meisel would catch the finest horses off the commons about Terre Haute and run them over to his convict friend who would dispose of them. The peddling wagon was only a stall to drive past the police station, as he said, to show the police that he was trying to make an honest living.

Out of prison again, Meisel

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



came to Terre Haute and established an office on South Sixth street, as a veterinarian, but continued his life of crime. This time he tried to take over the property of a wealthy woman here, but was convicted of forgery and sent up for his fifth term. His conviction, so far as local police records show, was in 1894. In 1905 detectives from Pennsylvania came here to look up Meisel on behalf of a wealthy woman. They were to be married and the bride-to-be decided to check up on the prospective groom's background. No wedding announcements were ever received here, so it was supposed the ex-convict lost his victim.



# Nancy Rosella Tritt, 19, Murdered in Sandford

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Is JAN 20 1974

Last week's column dealt with the founding of the little village of Sandford in Fayette township, Vigo County, Ind., on the Illinois state line, as written by Miss Edith Bird, a student at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College. Her careful research of the town's history included personal interviews with old-time residents and descendants of the earliest settlers of Sandford.

According to Beckwith's HISTORY OF VIGO AND PARKE COUNTIES, there was only one murder committed within Fayette township boundaries. This was the murder of Miss Nancy Rosella Tritt, age 19 years. She was the daughter of Burguine and Ann Noel Tritt. Her mother having died, her father married Ann Masterson in 1865. Between this date and the date of Ann Masterson's death in 1872 the murder took place. The tombstone records the death on Oct. 25, 1877.

Miss Tritt stayed a good deal with her grandparents, the Smiths, but was killed in the home of her father. A mention of the murder appears in Beckwith's biographical sketch of Burguine Tritt. However, a more accurate account has been obtained from Miss Tritt's niece, Mrs. Mont Rhoden (Vernice Tritt).

"Aunt Rosie" was visiting her father and stepmother at the time of her death. A



DOROTHY J. CLARK

young man was spending the summer months at the Tritt farm, working for the family. He was a relative of Miss Tritt's stepmother and had been refused the attentions of the younger woman. Miss Tritt had been making plans with another young man, Frank Ferguson, for their wedding. The family retired for the night, Mr. and Mrs. Tritt sleeping downstairs and Miss Tritt upstairs. The murderer crept into the household and placed a stocking soaked in chloroform between the sleeping Mr. Tritt and his wife. Then having gone upstairs, the murderer stabbed Miss Tritt and rolled her body in a carpet. One account states that he first cut off her head and legs. Kerosene was poured and ignited. The flames spread throughout the house and the blaze could be seen from Paris, Ill. Mr. and Mrs. Tritt were able to escape the fire. Immediately the neighbors turned out to hunt down the murderer, who had fled unseen, possibly jumping a train which would have slowed down for the Sandford crossing. Some believed him to be hid beneath a straw stack where his trunk was found. Thomas Bird dared to go in to seek out the man, but found only his few belongings. Later, the murderer was heard from out West. In a letter to some

cousins, he admitted his guilt for his crime. This man, the murderer, is believed to be Sylvanus Burnham. The body of Miss Tritt was buried in the Smith Cemetery.

In 1874, J. H. Hussong erected a grist mill and he operated the same until, in 1877, he sold it to Daniel Kihler. A large amount of flour was shipped out yearly from this business. Later, Mr. Hussong began a steam saw mill which in 1879 was proving

successful "as timber is yet plentiful in this region."

Doctor John A. Bright, M.D., came to Sandford in 1877. In 1891, there were three doctors in the town — Doctors Theodore Brown, Richard Belt, and John H. Swap. About 1901-02, Doctor Cecil Ray came to Sandford from near Cory, Ind. Unfortunately, his

first patient, Ethel Tritt, died. The family assured the new doctor that this fatality would have no bearing against his medical abilities and that he would have patients in Sandford.

Had the growth of Sandford, encouraged by new business,

Continued on Page 6, Col. 1.

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
ONE LIBRARY SQUARE  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47807



# Dorothy Clark

25 JAN 20 1974  
Continued From Page 1

continued at this rapid pace, now there would be quite a bustling city where the railroad meets the Illinois state line. However, this has not been the case. Even at such an early date as 1879, merely 25 years after incorporation, the die had been cast, the town was becoming stagnant. In making note of the district status of the Sandford school, the Edgar county history stated "the incorporation of the town is about practically annulled." The date of this annulment (for today Sandford is no longer legally a town) is uncertain. However, a year later in 1880, Sandford was still "the incorporated village in Fayette township."

The 1884 Terre Haute and Vigo County Directory mentions a new industry in Sandford, a stove mill. The town was also receiving the benefits of daily mail and American Express, both by rail. However, the importance of Sandford as a business center for the community was dwindling. Since the 1860's Terre Haute had become the home of many diverse industries, from the Terre Haute Elevator Company to the hominy mills of Hudnut & Co., providing both employment and goods to the citizens of the county. Terre Haute was also an important rail center as "seven distinct lines of railroad traverse Vigo County, all of which converge at the city of Terre Haute." Sandford could no longer compete with Terre Haute for the business needs of the residents of northwestern Vigo County. The town slowly diminished in size.

But life in the area did not stop. Remaining in the history of Sandford, Ind., are two events for which the town received a large amount of publicity. Both of these occurred in the early months of 1907, in fact within a few weeks of each other. Both were explosions in origin, one costing many lives and in-

juries and the other without a single casualty.

On Saturday evening, Jan. 19, 1907, between 60 and 80 people boarded the train in Terre Haute. Some were coming home from their jobs in the city, others for a weekend visit to family and friends at Sandford, Vermillion, or Paris. As the westbound passenger train approached the Sandford crossing, freight train No. 99 was stopped on the sidebed. On the latter train were three cars containing an explosive device. Some say it was dynamite, other nitroglycerine, or black powder. The origin of the shipment was uncertain (Concord Junction, Mass., Indianapolis or Fontanel, Ind.) but its destination was East Alton, Ill.

The No. 3 passenger train was approaching the depot at five to fifteen miles per hour. The locomotive pulled the tender, the mail baggage car, the smoking car and one coach. As the third car of the passenger train passed the freight cars carrying the explosives, something happened which has not yet been explained. One, perhaps two explosions were heard. At once faes spread over the debris. Bodies were crushed, dismembered, mutilated, some beyond recognition. The entire passenger train was reduced to scrap iron and eight cars of the freight train were destroyed. Human limbs, metal, personal papers were strewn in a radius of five hundred feet on both sides of the tracks in a 20-acre field and woods. The window glass of every home in Sandford was broken by the blast. The station house clock recorded the time of the disaster at 8:50 p.m. Thirty people were killed outright or died as the result of their injuries. Victims were rushed to area hospitals and 20 doctors arrived in Sandford to help.

Two known victims of the explosion still reside in the Sandford area. They are Elmer Tweedy and Trace Rhoden.

Less than a month later the Methodist Episcopal church was dynamited. The middle section of the building was

destroyed, while the roof and both ends remained intact. No one was in the church at the time so there were no casualties.

Who set the explosive and for what reason? The answers remain a mystery. Rumors by the townspeople pointed toward a group of young men from the area, one of whom was tried and imprisoned for the deed. Roger MacDonald owned a saloon in the village. Some people were saying he was the guilty party. They cited the temperance notions of the church people and MacDonald's quickness to anger as proof. He was tried, convicted and given a life sentence, of which he served about 15 years. At his court room trial MacDonald got hold of a gun and tried to shoot the prosecuting attorney, a Mr. Cooper. He missed and killed instead the railroad detective, Mr. Dwyer.

Today Sandford is a quiet village with no industries nor important business areas. Only a few people are employed by the town remaining family owned stores. The railroad no longer makes a stop there nor does the depot still stand. The school has been closed for many years and within the last months the church has been torn down. A victim of the times, it could not offer what Terre Haute did as a center of trade and in employment. But Sandford has its memories!



REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Township (Vigo Co.)  
Pierces and Towns (Ind.)  
**Holdaway Papers Tell of  
Bat Roost Saloon Events**

JUN 23 1974

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

I'm indebted to some old family papers of local resident Loren W. Holdaway for some interesting tales of early Lewis, Ind., in Pierson township, Vigo County.

Many activities took place or centered around a saloon there owned by Mahlon Lucas, when the town was known as Centerville, later owned by Martin Prater, and still later by Prater's brother-in-law, Munson Gosnell, who named it the "Bat Roost Saloon."

In 1864, Lucas married a local woman who owned a considerable tract of land at Centerville which they had decided to sell.

Two men, John Risley, who lived on a farm near the middle of Pierson township, and Moses Holmes, who lived in Riley township north of Lockport (Riley), Ind., plotted how to get this land without paying for it.

They agreed on a price with Lucas and his wife, making a small down payment. Foolishly, Mrs. Lucas signed the deed, and her husband, Risley and Holmes left for Terre Haute, supposedly to obtain the rest of the money.

Holmes and Lucas were drinking when the trio left Centerville that afternoon. They stopped at Risley's house for supper, and after dark were seen in Lockport several hours later where they purchased whiskey.

The next afternoon, Risley and Holmes returned to Lockport with the deed, saying they had paid Lucas and that he had "gone east," leaving his wife.

Soon, rumors began to spread and foul play was suspected. A local seeress who had been "born with a caul," went into a trance and proclaimed she saw the body of Lucas in a pool of water under some brush.



DOROTHY  
CLARK

The search began and after dragging all the creeks and ponds between Centerville and Terre Haute, Lucas' body was found buried in a sand drift about 100 feet south of the old bridge over Honey Creek on the Lockport Road (this would be 200 feet south of the present bridge over Honey Creek on Highway 46).

The murderers had placed the body in a large coffee sack and half buried it in the sand.

Holmes and Risley were arrested and an investigation began. It seems the down payment on the property had been made with counterfeit money made in bullet molds and flattened out, instead of good currency made at the United States Mint.

Risley was convicted and sentenced to Jeffersonville Prison where he died in 1869. It seems he caught his hand in some of the factory machinery at the prison, mangled it badly, and without proper medical attention

Continued On Page 6, Col. 4.

**Dorothy Clark**

Continued From Page 4.  
Ts JUN 23 1974

developed blood poisoning, which caused his death.

Holmes was released from custody because of a legal technicality, and left Vigo County as quickly as possible. He went to Louisville where his protracted drinking caused him to see several snakes crawling about on a saloon floor there. This caused him to stop drinking. He moved to Kansas City and lived an upright industrious life and died there many years later.

Another happening at Lewis also involved strong drink at the Bat Roost Saloon. In June, 1894, Johnny A. Cummings Jr., John Annis Jr., John Badders, Mike Madden and their band of Alum Cave Miners, had been drinking at the saloon pretty steadily. They hatched up a plan to capture the Chicago-bound St. Bernard No. 1 coal train from Earlington, Kentucky, on the south side of the little village of Lewis and have some fun.

They carried out their plan and ran the train to the Centerville Station and "burned it to the earth." This gave the townspeople something to talk about for years.

Another happening involved the E. & TH Railroad on Sept. 19, 1890. Fredrick Shoemaker engineer, filled his big Rogers No. 101 steam engine at the Turman Creek water tank, and with a tender full of Pioneer "Currysburg slack," he rolled down to Farmersburg to make the Alum Cave run. He was pulling thirteen coal cars and a caboose.

Miss Susan Zellers, daughter of Joseph Zellers, was walking down the railroad tracks from her home to the Rex postoffice in John Gambill's store at Centerville Station. She stepped off the tracks to let the east bound engine and cattle cars go by, then stepped back on the tracks and continued walking, unaware that the caboose and 13 empty coal cars had been cut loose for switching and were silently

creeping up behind her. The large sunbonnet she was wearing blocked her view.

The caboose struck the girl, knocking her down, rolled across her body as did the thirteen coal cars. Her legs were almost severed and after amputation at St. Anthony's Hospital in Terre Haute she died from shock and loss of blood.

Next week we'll continue some of the unusual and interesting happenings of old Centerville (Lewis) in Pierson township.

Community Affairs File

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



# Riots and Shoot-Outs In Village of Lewis

Community Affairs File

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

To JUN 30 1974

Community Affairs File

A coal town was alleged to be the most likely place for a murder or riot to occur, but as often as not, the little farming villages had their share of violence.

Christmas night riot of 1874 was long remembered by the residents of Centerville. On this night the Stewart boys rode into town, and after a few snorts of "Old Tanglefoot" at Martin Prater's Saloon, the clan decided to take on all the community of Centerville. There was really no significant amount of property damage done, but most of the Stewart boys rode out of town that night with skinned heads.

However, this was the start of constant trouble with Web Stewart which would end on the afternoon of Aug. 14, 1888.

Western legend would have us believe that a gun fight was on equal terms, a face to face showdown. This would seem to be a very risky way to kill someone, and the fact of the matter is that after the era of dueling had passed, about the only time a man was shot in the face was when he turned around to see who was shooting at him.

This was the situation when Charley C. Givens gunned down Web Stewart in Bill Watson's Centerville Saloon.

Charley Givens was born near Paris, Ill. He was the son of Rev. William M. Givens who later moved to Centerville, Ind. Charley moved to Centerville in 1875, and after finishing medical school in 1877, he hung out his shingle and began the practice of medicine.



DOROTHY CLARK

The same year he married Miss Lizzie Thomas, of Sullivan County, whose parents had died when she was a child and had been reared by her uncle C. F. Woods.

Webster Stewart was one of the several sons of the well-respected Pierson Twp. farmer, Charles Stewart, who lived two miles from Centerville. The Stewarts were a close clan, but always fighting among themselves. Too fond of the bottle, they did not hold their liquor well.

Web Stewart was a very likable person when sober, but hard to tolerate when drunk. He was always ready to start a fight or engage in one. In fact, in 1871 Web had lost an eye in a fight with Josiah Pierson. A few years later he had taken a shot at Elias Lambert in a saloon brawl at Centerville.

A butcher by trade, Web ran the Centerville meat market and did some farming on the side. Before the tragedy, Stewart, the father of a 17-year-old boy, had married for the second time. It was rumored that Web severely mistreated his wife when he was "in his cups."

By 1886 the citizens of Centerville had started a movement to suppress the selling of liquor to Web and several other "rowdies" and asked Dr. Givens, a notary public, to write out the notice in legal terms notifying saloon keepers not to sell liquor to the men because when they were intoxicated they threatened the peace of the community. Needless to say, this

Continued On Page 6, Col. 1.

## Dorothy Clark

To JUN 30 1974

Continued From Page 4.

was the start of ill will between the two men.

Stewart's drinking affected the doctor in another way. As his tenant farmer, Stewart was neglecting the doctor's crops and his farm income. In the spring of 1888 Web had planted oats and when harvest time came, he was drunk most of the time. When Dr. Givens complained, Stewart became violently angry and threatened him.

On Monday evening, Aug. 13, 1888, Dr. Givens walked into Singhurs's Drug Store in Centerville to get a prescription filled. Stewart came in determined to cause trouble, but was asked to leave.

A short time later he returned, threatened the doctor, struck him with a bottle and a fight resulted which was very indecisive. Stewart left the store. When the doctor started to leave, he saw Stewart standing in front of his butcher shop across the street with a meat tenderizer in his hand.

Being a rather timid man, Dr. Givens went out the back door, crawled over the back fence and went home. He loaded his shot gun with bird

shot, and decided against his usual stroll up town that night.

The next morning, the doctor's horse had thrown a shoe so he took the animal Bowman's blacksmith shop before going to his office.

Jesse Harrold came in and told the doctor that Stewart was up town making threats to kill him and offered to deliver his prescriptions for him. He advised him to avoid Stewart if at all possible.

Deliberately avoiding Stewart, Dr. Givens went out to Uncle Jesse Boston's, then to see Alex Cummings, and was just leaving Adolphus Farr's when Stewart approached from about sixty feet away.

The doctor hurried to his home and finished a letter he had been writing to his wife Lizzie who was in Winfield, Kans., where she had gone for her health (she had tuberculosis).

Meanwhile, Stewart had stopped in the drugstore and asked if anyone had seen "that cowardly cur." He announced he was hunting for him and "could whip him the best day he ever knew." He stated that when he found the doctor, "he would have his heart's blood," and that he "would knock him down and make his dog chew his head off." Stewart was referring to his bull dog, always his best friend in a fight.

Next week we'll continue with the famous shoot out in Lewis, Ind.

To JUN 30 1974

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



# More About the Riots and Shoot-outs in Lewis, Ind.

TS JUL 7 1974 By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Last week's column told of the long-standing trouble between the little village of Centerville (earlier name of Lewis) in Pierson township, and Webster "Web" Stewart, one of the numerous clan in the community. He was the town butcher, a farmer, and described as likeable when sober, but hard to tolerate when drunk. Too fond of the bottle, he could not hold his liquor well, and became fighting mad and dangerous when "in his cups."

The trouble culminated on the evening of Aug. 13, 1888, in Singhurse's Drug Store, when Stewart attacked Dr. Givens, hit him with a bottle, and caused a fight. The doctor has made his way home by the back streets and was writing a letter to his wife who was in Kansas suffering with tuberculosis when we take up the tale again . . .

In the best western novel tradition, the sun was just setting that evening in Pierson Twp. when the doctor put down his pen and picked up his loaded shotgun. He stepped out into Pearl St., and started downtown.

When he came to Dick Cochran's Grocery he inquired of Prof. and Frank Scott who were standing in front of the store, if they knew the whereabouts of Web Stewart. They informed him that Web was in the Centerville Saloon.



DOROTHY CLARK

Web and Billy Watson, the bartender, were the only occupants of the saloon when Dr. Givens opened the screen door and walked in. It is doubtful if Web, who was unarmed, ever saw Givens, for as he turned on his bar stool to see who had entered, the doctor emptied a barrel of bird shot into his side and Web Stewart fell dead, at the age of 40.

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Community Affairs File

There is no doubt Stewart had been building up to his untimely end for many years. Since there was no law in small country towns to handle such matters at that time, nor any rules governing mentally ill or dangerous persons, most people thought Dr. Givens was justified in his actions. Some felt the doctor's timing was in bad taste, since Stewart had given the doctor many opportunities to kill him while actually being threatened and undoubtedly would again.

After firing the shot, Dr. Givens left the saloon and returned to where the men were standing in front of Cochran's store. He said, "This is terrible, I can not stand it much longer." He then went to his house a short distance away.

Late that night a procession of buggies left Centerville for Terre Haute carrying Dr. Givens and his friends to the home of attorney J. G. McNutt in the Prairie City and engaged him for the doctor's defense.

From there they went to the home of County Coroner Dr. Haworth. After \$5,000 was posted for his bail, the caravan then returned to Centerville accompanied by

Continued On Page 7, Col. 4.

## Dorothy Clark

Continued From Page 4.

Deputy Sheriff Shaley and the Coroner who examined Stewart's body.

The trial took place Jan. 2, 1889, in Vigo County Circuit Court. Henry, Piety and Hamill represented the State. The defendant was represented by McNutt, McNutt & Lamb.

Over 150 witnesses were called to testify at the trial, including William Watson, Elijah Criss, William Stout and B. Reynolds of Centerville.

Regardless of the social position of Dr. Givens, the defense was uneasy. Samuel R. Hamill, aggressive young Sullivan county lawyer, was a worthy opponent.

To gain the sympathy of the jury, the dying wife of Dr. Givens was wheeled into the courtroom each morning in her invalid's chair. Supposedly she only wished to live long enough to see her husband freed.

On Jan. 5, the case was handed to the jury with instructions from Judge Mack to free Givens. After two ballots, the jury found Dr. Givens innocent of the charges. It was reported that on the first ballot there were two votes against him.

Mrs. Elizabeth "Lizzie" Thomas Givens had been granted her last wish. She died July 27, aged 29, at her home in Centerville.

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE



# Much History Revealed in Police Chief's Letters

Community Affairs File

To FEB 2 1976 By DOROTHY J. CLARK

I'm indebted to Doyme Myers, local resident, for loaning me a box full of old correspondence of the Terre Haute Police Department of 1906-7, mostly letters to and from the Chief of Police Harvey Jones. The original letters to him with pencilled notes by Mr. Jones indicating how they were to be answered were found in an attic in an old file box, forgotten and collecting dust for nearly 70 years.

The Bertillon system, the first scientific method of criminal identification, developed by Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914) and based on classification of body measurements was still in use in 1906 and 1907 when these letters were written. Fingerprinting was in its infancy in police work, having been adopted in 1901 by England and Wales. In 1903 several of the New York prisons began fingerprinting, and in 1904 the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kan., was granted authority to fingerprint prisoners there.

In February, 1906, there were several letters written to Chief Jones from the E. & T.H. Railroad complaining about coal thieves. They asked the city to furnish a plain clothes officer to assist railroad patrolmen in apprehending people boarding trains and stealing coal. Agent W. E. Farris agreed to give the train times so the police could be in the railroad yards on time.

Many of the letters received by the Chief came from irate wives hunting errant husbands, penniless mothers with broods of small children also looking for errant husbands and fathers to help support them, and husbands or male

relatives looking for errant wives or female relatives from the small towns and farming communities in the Wabash Valley. They feared for the fate of the weaker sex in what



DOROTHY J.  
CLARK

was then truly "Sin City."

Horse thieves, confidence men, dishonest traveling salesmen and pickpockets along with escaped prisoners, army deserters, etc., made up the reason for most of the mail received by Chief Jones. Lacking the modern-day radio and electronic equipment, communication between police chiefs was much slower, although there are many telegrams included in the collection.

When a circus was coming to town, Chief Jones sent letters to the police chiefs of cities and towns where the circus had played previously asking

if there had been any trouble with "dips," pickpockets or swindlers who followed the shows. Letters came from all over reporting problems, arrests, descriptions of those who got away, and even some good words to say about the circus.

The situation worsened the next year, and the circus hired Pinkerton's National Detective Agency to guard against thieves, sharpers, "hoisters", and men like "Squirrel" Finerty, "Gonk" Finerty, "Baldy" Egan and "Buffalo" Marshall.

From Bloomington, Ill., came a letter to "Terahut" asking, "I have heard so much about your city I am in about half notion to become a citizen but before doing so I thought it best to write you a few lines and find out something in regard to size of population. Some say 40,000, others say 75 to 80,000. What is population? How many railroads and what kind of factory town is it? How much wages does a laboring man get a day?" Jones was able to give a good account of Terre Haute. In 1906-7 our city was booming, the glass factories going full blast, and employment was favorable for the working man.

One letter intrigued me from a woman in Peru, Ind. She told of seeing a band of gypsies west of Peru and noticed a light-haired boy going in a tent where the women were cooking. She had read in a newspaper of a missing boy who fitted the description and sent the clipping along. The clipping carried a Terre Haute dateline of May 6, 1907, and concerned "Indiana's famous kidnapping case, that of Richmond Byers, is still an impenetrable mystery. The lad was stolen from the small mining town of Seelyville, near Terre Haute, on May 29, 1904. He had been playing with other children in the afternoon and ran home to leave his tricycle about 3 o'clock. His parents supposed the boy intended to return to the playground, but they never saw him again. A neighbor saw him stop and speak to a strange man. Five gypsy wagons passed through Seelyville that afternoon, but there were six when the band reached Terre Haute. Five of

Continued on Page 5, Col. 2.

Community Affairs File

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Vigo County Public Library

over

# Dorothy Clark

To FEB 2 1975

Continued From Page 4.

the wagons were overhauled and searched, but the sixth eluded pursuit. Dr. L. S. Byers, father of the lad, believes that the boy was carried away by gypsies. He has visited every section of the country and traced hundreds of clues, but every effort has been futile. A fund has been established by popular subscription and is on deposit in Terre Haute which enables Dr. Byers to keep up the search. Richard Byers, if alive, would be seven years old this July (1907). He is of light complexion, has gray eyes, left eye noticeably crossed has a small V-shaped nick in the edge of the left ear and has a sharp chin."

Police Chief Jones received a complimentary season ticket for Lake View Park for the 1907 season from the Terre Haute Amusement Co. H. E. Breinig was vice president and general manager; W. W. Kaufman, president; J. C. Holden, secretary-treasurer; Geo. J. Breinig, manager; and H. K. Burton, press representative. The amusement park was located on the south side of East Wabash west of Brown Avenue.

The Deputy Marshal at Olney, Ill. wrote Chief Jones that he had a warrant for Dennis Moore and his wife Ella who were supposed to be hiding in Terre Haute. They were indicted for selling whiskey illegally on the river near Merom on a whiskey boat. Chief Jones assisted in their arrest in Dec., 1906.

From a Detective Agency at Danville, Ill. came a letter "in re Collings. I have information that he was here. One Liggett, a miner, says he met him and he told him he had shot an officer at your place. . . . if here now you will get him if we have to send him in a box." Law was tougher in those days!



# 1877 "Yellow Journalism": The Whitehouse Story

TS JUN 1975

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Community Affairs File

Two printers employed by the local newspaper DAILY EXPRESS joined forces and published on their own a small pamphlet entitled "Ernest Whitehouse: The Modern Dick Turpin." This was in 1877, and according to the city directory Charles O. Ebel, printer, resided at 219 S. 2nd St. His partner, Marion A. Murphy, printer, boarded at Mayers House, 29 S. 1st St.

A copy of this example of "yellow journalism" was found by a local book collector who loaned it to me and suggested the facts stated in the book might be checked out for accuracy. The flyleaf stated the story was "a sketch of his life, the shooting of Deputy Sheriff John Cleary, the flight, pursuit, and escape into Embarrass swamps, with romantic sketches connected with the young desperado."

The story begins on the banks of the thickly wooded Embarrass river, the Dismal swamp of Illinois, on a quiet evening in June, the year 1877. The hunted fugitive was described as young, not more than 20, dark eyes, dark hair, slight figure, armed with two revolvers, and desperate with a savage look in his eyes.

The first chapter deals with his successful escape and hiding from lawmen in a cave. Detective Gibson mentioned

in the posse might have been Eleazor Gibson, 1222 S. 1st St., listed as a policeman.

Chapter Two begins: "The city of Terre Haute was thrown into a wonderful commotion on the evening of Friday, June 8th. John Cleary, deputy sheriff, had been shot down in the street at nine o'clock in



DOROTHY J.  
CLARK

the evening. The crime was a strange one, sudden and to a great extent overhung with mystery until some time afterward. The officer had a prisoner, young Ernest Whitehouse, in charge, and had him under arrest for some hours. He, in company with Chief of Police Stack, met Whitehouse, and as he passed him on Sixth street, at the National Hotel, called to him that he wanted to see him. The young man at once turned. The officers at once took him under arrest, telling him that he must go with them to the station house. Once there he openly accused

him of burglarizing the store of Patrick Hickey on Poplar street."

"Whitehouse," said Cleary, "you know you did it. Confess and it will be easier with you."

"I'll tell you the truth," said Whitehouse, after an apparent mental struggle. "I did steal the money but I don't want to go up for it."

"Cleary considered an instant. Well, Whitehouse, I'll tell you, if you will return the money, we'll let you go."

The three set off to find Hickey, the man from whom the money was stolen, and he was willing to drop charges if the money was returned. Cleary and Hickey went with the young thief to get the stolen money hidden at his home on Eighth street under a floor board. Ten dollars and a half were recovered, and Whitehouse agreed to find his accomplice and get the rest of the money.

Hickey went back to his store and told Stack that Cleary had gone with Whitehouse to find the other party, proceeding up 7th St. Stack at once set out after them, but was unable to find them and went on the station house to wait for them.

According to the account, "the deputy and his prisoner had gone up 7th St., west on Ohio to 5th St., and while crossing 6th St., Whitehouse asked Cleary to smoke, offering some cigars. . . . Cleary declined. All this time he had been revolving in his mind the idea of enticing Whitehouse to some light place where he could disarm him, as he felt almost sure he had a pistol. When they arrived at the corner of the street, Cleary asked his prisoner to step down to Sibley's saloon, and take a cigar. Instantly he saw his mistake. Before the thought had flashed through his mind, fairly, the young desperado exclaimed, 'G.d..n you, you refused to take a cigar from me, and now you want me to go to a saloon to take a cigar with you. You are lying to me!'"

As he said this, he threw his left hand back, drew his revolver from his hip pocket.

Continued On Page 10, Col. 2.

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

over



good Father McEvoy, and was taken home, his death momentarily expected."

"The police were at once notified, the bridges were guarded, the outside towns telegraphed, and every precaution to insure arrest. But for all this he escaped. He went at once to his mother's house, took another pistol, and a box of cartridges, and was gone around the corner of the house just as three policemen came in to see if he was at home. This was one theory of his escape; another was that he left the house disguised as a girl, just as the officers came in. A few days after the crime his mother smilingly remarked to a friend that it would be strange indeed if that 'young lady' who left the house that night was Ernest Whitehouse. It was also thought for a time that he was staying about the city dressed in girl's clothing which had been furnished him by his mother and sweetheart, the latter a young lady of respectability, holding a high position in the public schools, who was almost crazed with grief upon hearing of his crime . . ."

How do the facts in the story check out with the city directory? I found his mother had remarried and was Mrs. Emma Yates, 312 S. 8th St. There was no clue as to his schoolteacher sweetheart. There were 90 grocery stores listed in the city, but none on Poplar street run by Patrick Hickey. He was listed as a conductor and living at 801 Swan St. I could find no Sibley's saloon, and there was Whitehouse listed. The Stack Bros., Michael W. and Patrick W., were proprietors of the Exchange Hotel, 1009

Chestnut St., neither was listed as chief of police. Father McEvoy was the assistant pastor at St. Joseph's church.

The City Council was called together the night of the murder and offered a reward of \$200. The following day the County Commissioners - offered \$300, and Sheriff George W. Cariso added \$100 from his own pocket. \$500 reward for young Whitehouse, a juvenile delinquent and accomplished thief at the age of sixteen. He was the first bootblack in Terre Haute, and became a bell boy at the National House until he stole a large sum of money from a commercial traveler and left the city. After he returned to the city he continued his life of crime by housebreakings until he was caught by the police and jailed.

During an interview with a newspaperman at the jail he gave the turnkey the slip, shook off the deputy, and leaping the gate ran like a deer. After being caught, he was taken to Jeffersonville, where he served out the two years of his sentence. He had returned to Terre Haute in February, and was supposedly "converted" at revival meetings and trying to find work in St. Louis or Terre Haute without success. This was probably the first crime since his return. His whole life after the age of 15 was devoted to crime. Stories were told of his daring deviltry, the most spectacular of his actions was the running into the streets when he was only four years of age to stop running horses. His fleetness of foot was given as the reason he was so hard to catch in crime.

Next week's column will tell more of the Whitehouse tale and the other tragedy of crime which happened in Terre Haute, "The Mattox Tragedy," which is the concluding chapter of the century-old pamphlet written by Ebel and Murphy.

## Dorothy Clark

Continued From Page 4.

and fired twice, the first shot taking effect in the stomach, the second in the shoulder. The young villain turned and ran with a crowd at his heels, endeavoring to overtake him. He dashed into an alley, turning south from Ohio street, and firing at his pursuers, sprang away into the darkness. The wounded man was given absolution by the



# More of Ernest Whitehouse To JUN 8 1975 And the Mattox Tragedy

Community Affairs File

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

Last week's column dealt with the publication of 1877 entitled "Ernest Whitehouse; The Modern Dick Turpin." His escape after shooting Deputy Sheriff John Cleary was well chronicled as the posse chased him across the river into Illinois with hairs-breadth near misses, and whether true or not, makes for interesting reading. This would make interesting research for a modern-day criminology student, and I would like to know what really did happen to the murderer.

A chapter was devoted to the cause for the life of crime taken up by young Whitehouse. The authors Ebel and Murphy attributed his delinquency to associates. At one time he was a quiet, industrious boy, working hard to help support his widowed mother and brother and sisters. He used to rise early, and build office fires for gentlemen in the city, and the rest of the day he devoted to blacking boots and selling papers. It was said that he often made as high as four and five dollars per day at this kind of work.

But when he grew older he obtained a place on the railroad as train-boy, and there first commenced his bad habits.

A great many local citizens blamed his mother, and THE GAZETTE went so far as to say that from her he obtained his disposition to commit crime. One of the authors called on Mrs. Yates several times and described her home at 512 S. 8th St. as small, one-story house with a beautiful yard in front, full of flowers and shrubbery. She was described as middle-aged, dressed plain and neatly, and quite talkative on any subject except her son Ernest.

She told how he was a changed boy when he returned from the penitentiary. He worked at the Car Works until there was reduction in employment and he was thrown out of work. She blamed the police for not helping him but always shadowing him and ready to accuse him of any crime.



DOROTHY J. CLARK

After he shot Cleary, the police accused him of committing the Mattox murder. This crime took place May 2, 1877, at about 9:30 p.m., when Mr. Adam C. Mattox, a cooper, who lived at 454 N. 7th St., was passing along Chestnut Street on his return from the grocery. As he reached the mouth of the alley which runs from Eagle to Chestnut, in the rear of the residence of Judge A. B. Carlton, he was assaulted by some unknown person or persons who seized him by the throat, forced him to the ground, robbed him of watch and pocket book, shot him in the abdomen, and left him lying in the dust, mortally wounded.

David S. Sammis who was sitting at the window, on the southwest corner of 6th and Chestnut, heard the pistol shot, followed by a cry of agony from the victim. He hurried to the spot and found Mr. Mattox helpless and insensible. Sammis ran to the residence of Robert Thomas, adjoining that of Judge Carleton, where he found John E. Lamb, who was spending the evening with

Continued on Page 6, Col. 1,

## Dorothy Clark

Continued From Page 4.

To JUN 8 1975  
the Thomas family.

Together they returned to the scene where a crowd had gathered. Some one brought a lamp and by its light Mr. Lamb recognized the dying man and called him by name. Mattox came to and asked if the robber had been caught. He was able to answer questions, but did not know his assailant. Lamb and Sammis carried Mattox to the Thomas residence where he was placed on a couch in the front parlor. Dr. L. J. Willien was summoned and after examination learned Mattox had a short time to live. Pr. John E. Link and Dr. John D. Mitchell also were summoned and gave the same medical opinion to the family. Mattox died the following day at noon, aged forty years, proprietor of the Prairie City Cooper Shops on N. 8th St.

The heavy silk watch guard was found near the spot the next day. The pistol was found in the alley the next morning. It was a three dollar pistol, .28 caliber, nearly new, with one chamber empty.

Police officers Vandever, Gibson and Downey arrested Dan Russell and his partner, George Willard, on suspicion of murder. The City Council offered a reward of \$500 and as time went on the rewards totaled \$5,000. But all efforts to apprehend the murderer were in vain.

These two crimes, on May 2 and June 8, 1877, were the talk of the town for many months and evidently the two printers, Ebel and Murphy, saw an opportunity to "make a buck or two" by printing the full account of the happenings embellished with a little "schmaltz" so prevalent in the writings of that day.

It certainly cost them nothing to print the pamphlet because of the full page advertisements included in the publication. Fenner & Lotze, dealers in stoves, etc., at 311 Main St., included a picture of a cookstove similar to the one in the kitchen of the Paul Dresser birthplace. "Terre Haute" Riddle, the jeweler, advertised his store at 517 Main St. Jeffers, Sheesley & Co. owned the Vigo Woolen Mills at the corner of 10th and Main.

The Terre Haute Cent Store sold notions and fancy goods. The Wabash Flouring Mills, corner Main and Water streets, was owned by Kidder and Donmeyer. Regan & Best, 503 Main Street offered the best and cheapest wines in the city. Described as "one of the most select places in town where private apartments are furnished gentlemen who can enjoy to the fullest extent a glass of wine or a nice cool glass of beer." Harry A. Dodson, dealer in rags, old iron, copper, brass, zinc, old bones, hides, feathers, chickens, etc., was located at 1222 E. Main St. The Republican paper of Vigo County, THE SATURDAY COURIER, was advertised by its editor J. O. Hardesty. Mrs. Humaston ran a bakery at 30 S. 4th St. where ice cream was only ten cents a dish. Mrs. C. J. Adams owned the dry goods and notions store at the northeast corner of 13th and Main. Traveling men were urged to stop at the Mayer's House, 1st St., between Main and Ohio, at the western terminus of the street railroad, where the fare was only one dollar per day.

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE



# Historically Speaking

TS FEB 27 1977

Community Affairs File

By DOROTHY J. CLARK



One of the darkest chapters in Terre Haute's history began Monday evening, Feb. 25, 1901, with the murder of Miss Ida Finklestein, a young school teacher.

The twenty-year-old woman was walking from her rural Elm Grove School to the interurban line about five o'clock through a lonely area north of the Terre Haute golf club house when a black man, later identified as George Ward, aged 27, an employee of the car works, shot her in the back of the head and cut her throat, breaking the knife off in the wound.

Bleeding profusely, she somehow managed to walk about half a mile to the nearest house located on the National Road where she described her assailant and scribbled a dying message to her mother in Chicago. A doctor and an ambulance were summoned to take her to Union Hospital where she died a few hours later.

Readers must realize that 76 years ago police procedures were much different than they are today. Communication was much slower, but John Q. Public was much more helpful and ready to be involved. Information came pouring in to Sheriff Fasig, and by the next morning, Ward was apprehended and taken to police headquarters.

A neighbor who lived near 16th and Spruce told of seeing Ward leave his home dressed in hunting clothes, tan leggings, and hob-nailed shoes, matching the description given by the dying woman. Detectives checked with his boss, and Ward had "laid off" work that day.

Street car employees "eyeballed" the suspect and positively identified him. A pocket knife with one blade broken off was found on his person. A patrolman found his shot gun and the blood-stained hunting suit during a search of his home.

Word of the murder and the capture of the alleged murderer spread through the town like wildfire, and feeling ran high. As soon as he confessed the crime, he was rushed to the jail in the paddy-wagon under heavy guard, arriving only minutes ahead of the crowd of several hundred people.

The crowd hissed and booed and cried "kill him" and "take him out and hang him." Two men, both described as "cripples on

crutches" agitated the growing crowd. And here the newspaper accounts become confusing.

One account tells of the police efforts to disperse the crowds, but others felt officials waited too long to take action. They felt law officers should have barricaded the streets and kept the crowd from getting too close to the jail where they soon got out of hand. It's always easier to say what should have been done after the trouble is over. Wiring the Governor to send help was correct procedure, but hardly practicable under the circumstances.

By noon the crowd outside the jail numbered several hundred men, women and boys. They battered the jail doors, but were driven back by Jailer Lawrence O'Donnell who fired a shotgun over the mob's head. It stopped the crowd momentarily, but it also injured Deputy Sheriffs Cooper, Messick and LeForge who were struck by scattering shot. Another detail of police arrived, but the crowd kept

growing, excitement increased, and at 12:35 p.m., the jail doors were battered down with a piece of railroad timber 25 feet long, eight inches thick, and capped with metal on both ends.

The keys were taken and the cell room entered. Ward was dragged out fighting for his life, but a blow from a heavy hammer felled him after he had knocked down two of his attackers. A noose was quickly adjusted around his neck and the mob started toward the Wabash river bridge.

The mob fought with each other to get close enough to hit or kick the prisoner. No one bothered to conceal his or her identity, and since it was broad daylight, there was no difficulty in seeing who were taking part in the lynching party.

The unconscious (or dead) man was dragged face down to the drawbridge. Many were of the opinion he was already dead, but the hanging by the lynch mob proceeded. The rope was thrown over one of the upper beams and the body was drawn up. To excite the crowd even more, the body was swung back and forth at the end of the rope for their macabre enjoyment.

But still the mob was not satisfied. Some one suggested burning the body, and a fire was started on the river bank just south of the west end of

the bridge. The rope was cut and the body dropped on the fire. Turpentine, kerosene and other oils were thrown on the fire, and the body began to burn and char.

More and more people came to watch the awful spectacle of a human body being burned. The west end of the drawbridge was barricaded, but thousands of men, women and children congregated on the east bank and the east side

of the draw. It was alleged that the drawspan sank several inches due to the weight of the immense crowd.

One news reporter wrote of the "blood curdling savagery." He described the "passion inflamed mob" rending the remains of the negro and fighting for the grisly souvenirs as past belief. Pieces of clothing, bones, pieces of the hanging rope, even nails from his shoes were eagerly snatched up as souvenirs. Some were later traded in local saloons for money or booze, some were treasured as family keepsakes and are still to be found in many homes in the area.

Funeral services for the murder victim were held at the home of her uncle, Meyer Levin, the morning of Feb. 27. Some 500 persons attended the services conducted by Rabbi Leipsiger. Several of her little pupils attended, and the floral offerings from the community were described in great detail. Interment was in the Jewish Cemetery at the east edge of Highland Lawn.

The widowed mother, a sister and brother, attended the funeral, arriving here from Chicago. Other brothers and sisters were in an orphanage there. The father, Solomon Finklestein, was murdered four years earlier by a miner at Alum Cave in Sullivan county, and the little family was wholly dependent on Miss Finklestein for support.

The theory was expressed that Ward, known to have been a former inmate of an insane asylum, had observed the woman's habits and decided to accost her. When she resisted and turned to run, he shot her in the back of the head, then used the knife. Her handbag was found later at the site, still containing a small amount of money.

These two murders and the circumstances surrounding them are, to this writer, the blackest chapter in local history.

Vigo County Public Library

REFERENCE

DO NOT CIRCULATE



TS APR 9 1978

By Dorothy Clark



## *Crime & Criminals (17)* A sequel to the story of Ernest Whitehouse...

Community Affairs File

A former column told the story of Ernest Whitehouse, local convicted robber, who escaped the law after shooting former sheriff John Cleary.

His exploits while eluding capture filled the newspapers for months and his notoriety became the news sensation of a century ago.

The sequel to the story ended with the death of Cleary at his home, 12 S. 11th St., on the morning of April 9, 1892. The supposed chills that caused his death at the age of 48 years were brought on by the bullet that the deceased had carried in his stomach for 14 years.

During his public service he was shot four times by Whitehouse, and one of the shots entered his stomach. The ball was never recovered, and it was thought to have caused his death. He had had such an attack about a year previously.

A powerful man of genial temperament and many friends, John Cleary was born in County Limerick, Ireland, on March 27, 1844. He emigrated to this country and to Terre Haute in 1866.

First engaged in butchering, he was next employed at the E. & C. Railroad freight house. His fellow workers told of some of his feats of strength. Described as remarkably active and agile, he was a powerful man although rather slimly built. He frequently lifted a whole barrel of cider, catching hold by either end and lifted it up and placed it on another barrel and then lifted it down again.

Unexcelled in lifting and moving heavy articles which passed through the freight house, Cleary was still better at jumping. From a standing start, he often jumped with ease entirely over the opening left in the freight house for the railroad cars when sent in to be loaded.

Cleary had been a Deputy Sheriff for about three years when the Roberts & Hickey grocery store at Eighth and Poplar streets was robbed. The thief had gone in through a window transom and stolen \$10.

Patrick Hickey, one of the grocers, suspected Whitehouse, aged 20, who lived with his mother, Mrs. E. Yates, on South Seventh Street south of Oak. The transom was very small and Whitehouse was very slender and frequented the store.

Described as 5 feet, 7 or 8 inches, 130 pounds, very erect and quick in walking, dark complexion, dark hair cut very short, smooth face, hazel eyes, dark clothes, white shirt, buckle shoes and not wearing a hat when last seen, Whitehouse had served two years in the penitentiary and was known by railroad men as a newsboy.

Young Whitehouse, strange as it seemed later, was pointed out as an exemplary boy to be emulated by other lads. He attended Sunday School, was neat, prompt, honest, an industrious, hard-working boy who supported his mother as a bootblack and errand boy. He saved his money, and at one time had \$700 in the bank.

As a teenager, he was sent twice to the State Reformatory, and each time escaped. He was once arrested at the depot for thievery and sent to the county jail. For more serious crimes he was arrested by Cleary and sentenced to serve two years at Jeffersonville Prison.

Following the murder of the elderly Mr. Mattox, who had served on the jury when Whitehouse was convicted, Dr. Link stated that he believed Whitehouse was guilty of that murder because he had sworn vengeance.

The same with Cleary, reports were that Whitehouse shot him deliberately in the abdomen just above the navel, and when Cleary still would not turn him loose, shot him in the chest, the bullet passing through the armpit.

On June 3, 1877, Whitehouse was arrested near the National House by Cleary and taken to Chief Stack's office. The officers told him they had a witness who saw him go over the transom, but if he would confess and return the money they would release him.

They took him back to the scene of the crime, the grocery store, and then talked some more in the watch house on the E. & C. Railroad crossing at Poplar Street.

Finally, Whitehouse said, "Well, I will come to time." So they started back up Poplar Street. Near Meyer's Brewery, Whitehouse said, "If you fellows go back on me and prosecute me after I have given up the money, I will kill every man that has a hand in it."

Proceeding to Whitehouse's home, he fumbled around and got the money for Mr. Hickey. Hickey and Stack went to the grocery, and Cleary and his prisoner went down Swan Street.

Wall Sibley was standing in the door of his saloon on Fifth Street, south of the drug store, when he heard shots and saw two men on the east side of Fifth midway between the alley and Ohio. Badly wounded, Cleary was taken to the drug store where he took off his coat and stretched himself out on the counter.

Dr. Link was called and pronounced his wounds as fatal. The first shot entered the abdomen, the second severing the artery below the armpit and passed out behind. The Rev. Father McEvoy was summoned to administer the last rites, and Cleary's wife was called.

Deputy Sparks took the wounded man to his home, where he was given whisky and opiates freely. After hours of agony, he finally fell asleep.

When Chief Stack heard the shots, he ran to Fifth Street, saw Whitehouse running down the alley back of St. Joseph's Church firing at the crowd which pursued him. While getting the money at his home, he had apparently managed to get a revolver also.

Cleary struggled between life and death for several weeks before his strong constitution asserted itself and he came out of the ordeal a comparatively well man. From that day until his death he carried that leaden bullet. Cleary's brother came from Chicago to help care for him, the wife and small son.

He recovered sufficiently during the following year to capture his would-be murderer, although in doing so he received two more bullet wounds.

On May 3, 1878, nearly a year later, Whitehouse, who proved to be as elusive as the Irishman's flea, and had led law officers of Indiana and Illinois a merry chase while a fugitive, was cornered in the home of Mr. Kintz, at Fifth and Eagle streets. Chief Black, Dan Fasig, Cleary, Vandever and Buckingham surrounded the house.

Whitehouse caught sight of Cleary and reportedly shot him twice, once in the leg and once in the head. Despite his wounds, Cleary closed in on the fugitive and pluckily grappled with him. With assistance, Whitehouse was captured, but he gave Cleary all the credit declaring him the "nerviest officer he had ever seen."

Cleary loved horse racing and missed very few Derby Days at Louisville, Ky. He had a happy faculty for picking winners, and "his opinion and knowledge of turf matters was frequently sought."

Vigo County Public Library

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File



# Crime repeats itself, a review of the past suggests

While the recital of crimes of long ago may not appeal to all readers, it does point out my favorite theory that history does repeat itself — that only the people change who make the history.

The more recent tragic murders in Parke county are only crimes in a long procession of such events, especially before the Civil War.

At least three of these crimes were committed in Liberty township. At an early day, William Slocum, while hunting in the woods, came upon a wild cat dragging something from a brush heap. He killed the cat and found in its claws a dead newborn baby.

A girl named Smith, who lived nearby, was suspected. When an inquiry was begun, she arose from bed, dressed in man's clothes, walked to the Wabash river, hailed a passing steamer and departed. That was the last Liberty township ever heard of the unwed mother.

Luke Mead, of the same township, was an elderly man with a young wife of whom he was insanely jealous. Talkative and quarrelsome when drinking, his jealousy toward Lewis Thomas broke out in a violent argument in the town of Lodi, later known as Waterman.

Starting home by different routes, Mead was never again seen alive, and his swollen body was found a few days later in the beech woods. By his side lay a broken whisky bottle, and under his thigh a dead rattlesnake. Witnesses found scratches on his body that might not have been made by the snake, and on his throat were dark marks which might have been made by the fingers of a very strong man.

Lewis Thomas attended the inquest with other neighbors, and was arrested and taken before a justice. His

attorney pressed for a trial, and the evidence was judged insufficient to hold. No further action was taken, but the community judged him guilty and banded together to exclude him. When conditions became intolerable, he went to the California Gold Rush in 1849, where he died in 1850, in apparent peace and without reference to the tragedy. His case did not turn out the way his former neighbors would have preferred.

Another remarkable disproof of the popular idea that "murder will out" is found in the case of Washington Hoagland who lived with his brother Rowan in 1855 in an old farm house, set far back from the road. This gloomy looking place seemed the perfect setting for a mysterious crime.

Two girls described as "lewd" had been living in the house for a few days with Rowan's consent, but against the wishes of Washington who was described as "strangely quiet, almost simple-minded, and without an enemy."

One night Washington was called into the yard, a scuffle occurred, and next morning he was found dead, with a pistol in his hand, and on his throat the marks of strangulation.

When he was lifted from the ground, the pistol fell from his hand, which the people thought was proof that he did not die holding it. Strict examination of the brother and the girls developed no proof, though the latter were generally believed to have guilty knowledge.

No one was arrested, proof being lacking, and the suspected soon left the county. The experience of this township tends to prove that murder escaped detection as often, in proportion, as any other crime.

Far more sensational and sor-

Historically  
Speaking  
By Dorothy Clark  
Community Affairs File  
DEC. 30 1979





rowful was the case of Noah Beauchamp, the only man hanged in Parke county, for murdering his neighbor, George Mickelberry, over a matter of family honor. This story has been told before in an earlier column.

Another peculiar case concerned one Silas Bowers, a business man at a very early day in Numa. He was always in some local trouble, involved in lawsuits and considered an experienced rogue.

In 1854, Bowers lost a lawsuit because of the testimony of one Sidwell, and a few nights later Sidwell's barn burned with his crop and tools destroyed. Honest citizens rose en masse, seized Bowers and a few of his gang, whipped him and a hired witness named Burke until they confessed to the arson, then notified them "to leave on pain of death."

Burke left immediately, after detailing how Bowers employed him to burn the barn, and he in turn employed one Reeder, who really applied the torch. Reeder was chased into a swanp in Vigo county and mysteriously disappeared, never to be seen in this section of the country.

Bowers went to Terre Haute, and later returned to Parke county, backed by a new gang. The "Regulators" now saw that it was a life and death contest, as Bowers had not only employed attorneys and brought

suits, but had a gang of supposed assassins to aid him.

The citizens group again captured him, and whipped him so unmercifully that his back was a mass of raw and bleeding flesh. Then, it is reported, they tied him to a tree, placed a gun in Sidwell's hands and directed him to shoot Bowers. Sidwell offered to do so if enough of them would join in to make it uncertain who fired the fatal shot.

The county was now terribly excited. The first move of the Regulators had been generally approved, for some of the best men in the county were members. But some were against killing, and two parties formed. Bowers had a few sympathizers. He left, but again returned, this time only to ask permission to settle up his business affairs and then leave the country. This the Regulators readily granted.

But the mob spirit was now aroused, and good citizens could no longer control it. Other men were now "regulated" for new offenses against morality, and one, Ben Wheat, was fearfully lashed for no offense at all that anyone could recall.

Meanwhile, Silas Bowers finished his settlement, placed his remaining property in the hands of a trustee, and, with his wife, started for Illinois in a carriage. He had unwisely threatened vengeance just before leaving, and it was whispered about that his death was certain.

A few miles west of the Wabash river he was fired upon with unerring aim by two men concealed ahead of him by the roadside, and fell from his carriage mortally wounded, with blood spattering his wife's dress. The assassination was never successfully searched out, and it was not considered wise to inquire too closely for years after the incident.

In 1856 occurred another murder. Two young men, fifteen and eighteen years old, Oscar P. Lill and Charles H. Thompson, were students in the school of Couse and Condit. They

quarreled over some small affair in a literary society, which resulted in Thompson stabbing and killing his classmate.

Thompson fled to Mississippi, but was pursued and brought back the next summer. The trial was a long delayed one, with celebrated counsel, Hon. D. W. Voorhees as prosecutor and Hon. Richard W. Thompson for the defense. The murderer was finally sentenced for one year, but the governor pardoned him out in a few months, when he went to Iowa, served honorably in the Union army, settled in New Orleans, where he was city appraiser, and returned to Iowa following the revolution there in 1877.

Including the killing of Nellis Hart at Montezuma in the fall of 1856, Parke county had eight homicides up to 1881, of which three were directly due to whisky and two to lust. In the

1890's, Mrs. Lottie Vollmer was murdered by J. C. Henning in Rockville. The murderer was tried and hung at Crawfordsville, Montgomery County.

One of the most terrible tragedies of Parke county history occurred in April, 1896. An insane man named Alfred Egbert, of Rockville, killed with a shot gun a neighbor woman, Mrs. Hernan Haschke, her two children, Agnes and Herman, aged nine and seven, the sheriff, Colonel W. D. Mull, and his trusty deputy, William Sweem. He then hid in one of the stock stalls at the county fairgrounds and killed himself. Six lives were lost in as many hours at Rockville 83 years ago.

This history of violent crimes in Parke county ends with World War I. Some one else can bring the account up to date.



# Historically Speaking

T-S Valley

7-5-81

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

## City scene of two hangings

By DOROTHY CLARK

Long before the electric chair or gas chamber was ever dreamed of, it was the duty of the county sheriff to execute all persons receiving the death sentence.

Terre Haute has been the scene of two "legal" hangings, according to early records.

During this time, three murders were reported committed in Vigo County for which the men who were charged and found guilty received the extreme penalty.

One of these cases, however, was taken to Parke County on a change of venue and the execution was carried out in Rockville.

On July 5, 1844, Henry Dyas had the dubious honor of being the first man to be hanged in Vigo County.

The official execution took place at Strawberry Hill near the intersection of Sixth and Seabury streets.

Dyas was charged with murdering George Brock, a cattle drover from Illinois, in October, 1843.

The killing occurred in a cabin, the home of a local woman and her daughter, located in Nevins Township near what was known at that time as the Brooks' Mill on Otter Creek.

According to the accounts of the time, the home was described as a "low resort" where persons reportedly congregated and where liquor was apparently sold.

On a Saturday evening, Brock stopped at the place, and he and the woman reportedly argued over the liquor bill.

On the following day, Sunday, as Brock was leaving to go home, he stopped to talk with another man and was attacked from the rear, reportedly by Dyas, who struck him three times in the back of the head and neck with an axe, killing him instantly.

The man who killed Brock fled into the woods and hid in a hollow tree.

That night Dyas was arrested as he returned to the cabin — he was caught by officers who lay in wait for him and subsequently charged with the crime.

He fought his way through three terms of court, and in the last trial the jury was out only two hours when a verdict of guilt was returned.

He was sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead.

The case was tried before three judges, John Low, Jacob Jones and a Judge Dickerson, as well as a jury.

The hanging attracted thousands of people to the city.

They flocked to Strawberry Hill in wagons, buggies, on horseback and many on foot.

Some were said to have come from as far as 50 miles in Illinois, probably from the vicinity of the home of the dead man.

On the day of the execution, the day after the 4th of July holiday, a procession left the county jail, then located at Third and Walnut streets.

The condemned man, dressed in a white robe and seated upon the coffin in which he was to be buried, rode in the first wagon.

His impending death didn't seem to disturb Dyas very much, accounts say.

He bowed and spoke to several friends along the parade route.

Sheriff William W. Ray was in charge of the execution.

His deputy, Marvin M. Hickey, prepared the noose and placed it around the neck of the convicted Dyas.

Lacking experience in the gruesome task, the noose failed to work properly when the trap was sprung on which Dyas was standing.

Instead of dying instantly from a broken neck, he hanged until he strangled to death, making it a particularly memorable execution.

The second and last hanging in Terre Haute occurred on Christmas eve, Dec. 24, 1869, during the term of office of Sheriff William H. Stewart.

The man hanged at this time was Oliver A. Morgan, who had been found guilty of the murder of John Petri, father of Charles Petri, retired member of the local police department.

The scaffold was erected in front of the jail located at the northwest corner of Third and Walnut streets.

A wooden enclosure had been built around the gallows platform on which the condemned man stood.

However, since there was no roof over it, an excellent view of the proceedings was obtained from the roofs of nearby buildings.

One account of this public execution was told by Attorney James P.

Stunkard and Charles T. Nehf, who were young boys at that time.

Stunkard's parents operated the Buntin Hotel on South Third Street, opposite the jail, so the boys were allowed to stand on the roof of the hotel with others and witness the execution.

Morgan, a Civil War veteran about 30 years of age, was charged with shooting and fatally wounding Petri on Sunday afternoon, July 11, 1866, when the latter reportedly caught him in the act of burglarizing his saloon and residence located on the southern point of the intersection of Lafayette Avenue and 13th Street at Twelve Points.

On this day, Petri and his family were just leaving home when Petri looked back and saw a man climbing over the fence at the rear of the building.

He returned, and by the time he entered the saloon on the first floor, upstairs, hiding under a bed.

When Petri grabbed the man's leg and tried to pull him out, the man drew his gun and shot him.

Although wounded, Petri was able to follow the man for some

distance before he dropped from loss of blood.

The man evaded arrest for two or three days.

Morgan, who was charged with the crime, was finally located by officers hiding in a clump of willows near the present site of the Terre Haute Water Works pumping station.

A few days after the shooting, Morgan was formally arraigned in Circuit Court before Judge Chambers Y. Patterson on a charge of murder.

His attorneys, Senator Voorhees and John P. Baird, filed a motion for a change of venue, which was overruled.

The first man to receive a death sentence for murder in Vigo county was Noah Beauchamp, a Sugar Creek township farmer living near St. Mary's, who was charged with stabbing his neighbor George Mickleberry on May, 1840.

The case was carried to Parke County where the hanging occurred in Rockville.

This was the only legal hanging in Parke County.

It took place in the winter of 1842, and attracted country-wide attention also.

*The hanging attracted thousands of people to the city.*

*They flocked to Strawberry Hill in wagons, buggies, on horseback and many on foot.*

*Some were said to have come from as far as 50 miles in Illinois, probably from the vicinity of the home of the dead man.*

*On the day of the execution, the day after the 4th of July holiday, a procession left the county jail, then located at Third and Walnut streets.*

*The condemned man, dressed in a white robe and seated upon the coffin in which he was to be buried, rode in the first wagon.*

*His impending death didn't seem to disturb Dyas very much, accounts say.*

*He bowed and spoke to several friends along the parade route.*

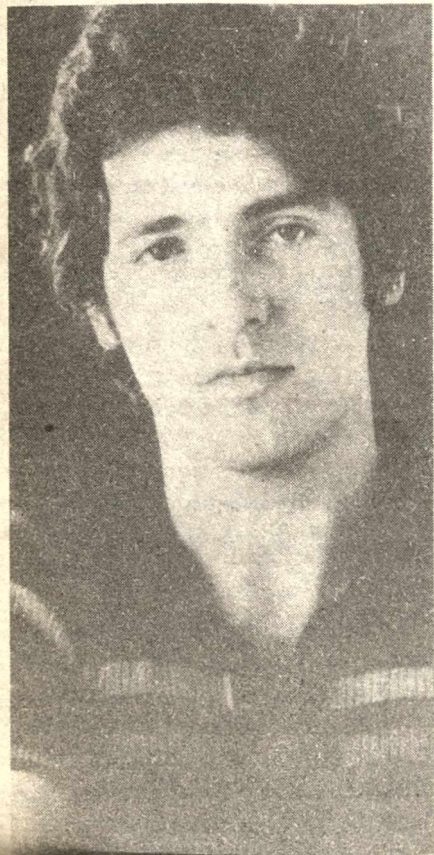
Vigo County Public Library



# BETWEEN THE LINES

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORIES YOU READ ABOUT CELEBRITIES

By Josie



**Q.** Bruce Springsteen is the best — is he going to continue doing concert tours? J. Gaynor, Mobile, Ala.

**A.** Right now, he's thinking about going into movies. One of his film ideas is to put together footage of a recent concert tour and release it as a combination concert and movie. Springsteen has also been approached about doing a remake of the Marlon Brando film, "The Wild Ones." Director Martin Scorsese is reportedly interested in Springsteen for yet another project and has given him carte blanche to choose his own property for a film in which to star.

**Q.** I read somewhere that Dudley Moore was in a riot. What happened? S. Dancy, Canton, Ohio.

**A.** Diminutive Dudley and girlfriend Susan Anton had decided to get away from it all in Bora Bora, an island they figured was so remote that no one there would know who they were. Unfortunately, his film "10" had opened on the island just 24 hours before his plane landed and was an instant hit. Wherever Susan and Dudley went, they were pursued by fans.

**Q.** I saw "Diary of a Mad Housewife" on the late movie the other night and wondered whatever happened to the actress who played the lead? H. Fields, Cherry Hill, N.J.

**A.** Carrie Snodgrass, the actress in question, dropped out of films during the mid-'70s to spend time with her then-live-in lover, singer Neil Young, and their son. That relationship is now over, and she returned to New York a few months ago to star off-Broadway in the play "A Coupla White Chicks Sittin' Around Talking." The return was not as smooth as she had hoped. On her third day in the city, she was mugged on the subway, then she fell out of a loft bed in her apartment. Her reponse to the incidents? "I guess the way to do well in New York is to keep a low profile and sleep close to the ground."



**Q.** Peter Allen looks like he must have a really glitzy lifestyle. What can you tell me about him? J. Waxman, Dallas, Tex.

**A.** Sometimes he does overdo the Beautiful People bit. Recently, for instance, he was flown over to the Cannes Film Festival for one night to perform at a private party that Tandem Productions president Jerry Prenchio was giving. The party was so exclusive, it turns out, that Peter received a call from the designer Givenchy, asking if he could get invited.

Anything you'd like to know about prominent personalities? Write: "Between the Lines," Terre Haute Tribune-Star, 721 Wabash Ave., Terre Haute, Ind., 47808. We regret we cannot answer any letters individually.



**Q.** I saw Andy Gibb on a TV show recently and he looked incredibly skinny. Is he on a diet? Y. Robbins, Baltimore, Md.

**A.** No, he's just been working hard. For his role as Frederic in the L.A. production of "The Pirates of Penzance," Gibb had to rehearse the strenuous dance numbers over and over. So, friends report, he lost a couple of pounds in water weight. His doctor has since put him on a special diet to gain it back.

**Q.** Donna Summer hasn't been too visible lately. What's she doing? G. Hurley, Little Rock, Ark.

**A.** She's considering the transition to the legitimate stage that Linda Ronstadt achieved so successfully. Producer Joseph Papp paired Donna with playwright Ntozake Shange ("For Colored Girls...") to see what the two could come up with. Results are still pending.

**Q.** I'm a die-hard football fan, but Dodger pitcher Fernando Valenzuela is so terrific I'm watching baseball more than ever. But one thing bothers me about him — why doesn't he try to learn English? K. Charles, Encino, Calif.

**A.** The Mexican-born Valenzuela has his mind on other things, it seems. But he is trying to pick up the language in his own way. Friends report that he loves to watch American cartoons and is beginning to pick up English phrases from them.



# Akers' gig part of Historical Museum

T's OCT 28 1984

According to Burns Indiana Statutes, Acts of 1937, "It shall be unlawful for any person to take, catch, kill, injure or destroy, or attempt to (etc. etc.) any fish in the waters of the state by means on any gig, spear, seine, net trap, weir, gaff hood, snare, electrical current, or by means of dynamite or other explosives, or by means of any substance which has a tendency to stupefy or poison fish, or by means of the hands along, or by any means other than angling with hook and line, except as in this act otherwise provided."

A fine of \$25 was set for failure to comply with the above law, and in 1947 it was amended making it also unlawful for persons to possess upon his person or in any conveyance of any kind a fish spear or gig from the first day of June to the last day of February.

A gig and a gig lamp last used by James Akers on the Wabash River before 1876, the year he died, was donated to the Historical Museum by his grandson, Ralph C. Dinkel. The gig is nine feet long with a four-tined iron spear on the end of the wooden handle. Originally the handle was wrapped with a rope line to facilitate reeling it in when it was thrown from the boat.

The gig lamp is a metal container mounted on a carved wooden shield. The container was filled with lard oil, and the three openings were filled with tow or coarse rope which was lighted to provide the light to attract the fish in the river at night.

One man would stand in the front of the boat holding upright the gig lamp mounted in an oar lock. The flare reflected off the shiny tine of the lamp would attract the fish to the surface, and the other fisherman would throw the gig and spear the fish if his aim was accurate.

The oarsman was the most important member of the crew, because much of the success of the night's fishing depended upon his expert feathering of the oars and his silent maneuvering of the rowboat.

According to the tales, some huge catfish were taken from the Wabash by this method in the good old days. In addition to being an

## Historically speaking



Clark is Vigo County's official historian and formerly worked for The Terre Haute Tribune.

By Dorothy Clark  
Special to The Tribune-Star

excellent sport enjoyed by the menfolk, it was also a dependable source of food for the large families of that time.

Another popular method of fishing used in nearby streams was the one known as "buckeyeing."

Dr. William B. Crooks, who located in Parke County in 1826, was credited with introducing the use of the bark of the roots of the buckeye tree to produce inebriation of fish, just as the berry, tender leaves and shots of the buckeye would produce drunkenness in cattle and other animals.

In 1856 a group of men decided to buckeye the Big Raccoon in Parke County when the water was at low stage. One day was spent in grubbing out the tree roots, and a good part of the night was spent in cutting, pounding and reducing them to a pulp.

Each man was expected to furnish one bushel of prepared bark. Three or four bushels of bark would affect the fish for two miles. A shallow ripple was chosen as the place to wash out the bark.

Two or three men would put a small quantity of the bark in baskets, sink them into the water, and rub the bark between their hands, raising the basket up and down, moving it to and fro across the stream so as to thoroughly mix the juice of the bark with the flowing water, and then strewing the residue across the channel. This was kept up until all the bark was used. Within a half hour its effect could be seen in the dawn's early light.

The contaminated water produced its effect as it passed through the gills of the fish, and

very few fish could escape. First the minnows began to act strangely, swimming around in circles on the surface of the water, often jumping out on sandbars. Very soon the larger fish acted in the same manner and the "sport" began.

With gig in hand, the drunken fish were easily taken. As the contaminated water moved along with the current, more fish became affected, until the strength of the poison was spent. Sometimes the sport lasted all day as the water became affected for two, three or four miles.

Suckers and that class of fish were the first to become affected. Bass would feast on the minnows in the morning, but by afternoon they were also affected and would lie in still water close to the shore with their heads upstream. Fish receiving a full dose rarely recovered.

A party of 12 men with four two-horse teams, 25 bushels of prepared bark and a barrel of salt decided to try their luck on Eel River one October night.

Never before had any of the men witnessed such a slaughter of fish of all kinds. It was hard work and excitement for all, some catching, others carrying them to camp, and others cleaning and salting them down. Before dark the whole barrel of salt was used in salting the fish and another barrel was purchased from a nearby farmer.

The surrounding neighborhood, hearing of the great slaughter, flocked to see the astounding sight. Late that evening Dr. Crooks took the largest catfish that was caught. Estimated at 150 pounds, when the gig handle was passed through the fish's gills, two men placed each end of the gig on their shoulders to carry it back to camp between them. The tail of the huge fish dragged the ground, even though both were tall men. The mouth of the fish was alleged to be large enough to admit a man's head.

The four wagons were so heavily loaded with the salted fish that everyone had to walk except the drivers. The catch was divided, and everyone had fish to last all the next year. Fish salted down late in the fall kept well without refrigeration a century ago.

REFERENCE

DO NOT CIRCULATE



Last week's column told of the murder of Paul Lindsey, the desperado of the Wabash River, smuggler, horse thief and self-confessed murderer, by a vigilante group of Merom, Ind. He lived with his family, outlaw gang and their girlfriends, on an island north and west of Merom Bluff which was owned neither by Indiana nor Illinois and was apparently immune from law enforcement by either.

Lindsey's paramour, Sarah Little, or Sal Little as she was known along the Wabash River, was said to have been a very attractive red-haired woman. She was supposed to have been the mistress of John Stewart, one of the outlaws in Lindsey's gang.

Events leading up to the vigilante action began with the attempted murder of Capt. Charles Pritchard of Merom, a veteran of the Civil War.

He and a college student from Ohio went on horseback to Grassy Pond (or Brushy Pond) north of Merom. Both were armed, and happened to come across one of the members of the Lindsey gang, who went into the river a few steps. Armed with two guns he opened fire on Capt. Pritchard, who remained on his horse. The desperado's marksmanship proved bad, and Capt. Pritchard, a revolver expert, fired several times at his assailant, all of which went amiss.

Finally his horse dropped to his knees when Pritchard fired and got his man. The man threw up both hands, dropped his guns, fell back into the deeper water of the river and disappeared.

In retaliation, Lindsey is supposed to have crawled up the steep bluff and have hid himself near the Pritchard home with the intent of murdering him when he came out of the house. Lindsey was detected before he had a chance to carry out this dastardly act.

The gun battle at the pond north of Merom, Lindsey's unsuccessful attempt to murder Capt. Pritchard near his home on the bluff, all this aroused the community and brought together the vigilantes from the Merom area and the outraged citizens across the river in Illinois. Under Pritchard's leadership they determined to put an end to horse stealing and thievery along the river by removing the gang's leader.

One night William Carver and Rufus Hutchings, confederates of John Stewart, came to the Stewart home during the summer of 1867. They had revealed some of the secrets of their lawlessness to Stewart and were afraid he would

## Historically speaking



Clark is Vigo County's official historian and formerly worked for The Terre Haute Tribune.

By Dorothy Clark  
Special to The Tribune-Star

turn them in to the law. They were admitted by Sal Little, and when she called Stewart, he was shot to death in the doorway by Carver. Sal was the only witness to the crime in the lonely cabin near the Wabash River in Sullivan County.

Their next thought was to get rid of her, and the last time she was seen alive was later one afternoon two days after the crime. Her disappearance resulted in some investigation, and it was suspected that she had been killed by Rufus Hutchings or Paul Lindsey, and her body thrown into the river.

Sept. 17, 1867, a bench warrant was issued in the Sullivan County Circuit Court by Richard W. Thompson of Terre Haute, the judge of the Vigo-Sullivan circuit, for the arrest of Hutchings on a charge of murder. Harry Mayfield was then county sheriff. Sewell Coulson was the prosecuting attorney, and Bayless Hanna of Sullivan and Daniel W. Voorhees of Terre Haute were the attorneys for the defense.

It was alleged that Hutchings' father was quite wealthy and could afford a good defense. After long litigation, Hutchings was released March 11, 1868, when the prosecuting attorney refused to continue the case, and the court then dismissed the case. Hutchings died several years later after making a deathbed confession to the murder of Sal Little.

William Carver was later tried in the circuit court on a charge of the murder of John Stewart. He was convicted and received a life sentence. He served 20 years before he was pardoned. He died in 1902 in the Soldier's Home at Leavenworth, Kan.

After a lapse of nearly 40 years, the mysterious murder of Sal Little in 1867 was largely confirmed March 30, 1903, when the skeleton of a woman was plowed up on the Woodworth farm east of Palestine, Ill., near the river. Old residents had no doubt as to the identity of the skeleton when two plaits of red hair were found in the grave.

Sal Little knew  
too much, just  
disappeared...

*Clark, Dorothy*  
*Hunter Life*  
*(End)*

APR 21 1985

Community Affairs File

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Vigo County Public Library



# Police blotter, 1885

## Register told of crimes — and more

FEB 23 1986

Clark, Dorothy +  
Community Affairs File

History

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Community Affairs File

To learn what was going on in Terre Haute in the crime department a century ago, it was necessary to read the police blotter.

Before the days of the telephone and all other electronic communication, it was required that each policeman write down in the Desk Register everything he saw, the arrests he made and all other items of interest before he could go off duty.

In fact, 100 years ago local police were called "Roundsmen" instead of patrolmen or traffic cops, and they walked their "beats" instead of riding in automobiles.

Even the paddy-wagons were horse-drawn. They were sent out with great regularity to pick up drunks and deposit them in jail. They also picked up men for conducting lotteries on downtown street corners and participants in alley crap games.

Each policeman was required to report the number of gas or gasoline street lights that were not lighted. During 1885 there would be 69 gas lights and 60 gasoline lamps not lighted following a storm. The new electric lights on College Avenue between 13½ and 14th were out also. But progress was underway. There was a complaint that the electric light company was erecting some of their poles in places that would obstruct gutters.

Policemen were required to note dead animals for picking up by the sanitary officers. They noted complaints of boys loitering around the new high school building (later Wiley), lost dogs and noted chuckholes and how deep the mud was in certain streets for the edification of the street department.

Juvenile problems were numerous. Citizens complained

### Historically speaking



Clark is Vigo County's official historian and formerly worked for The Terre Haute Tribune.

By Dorothy Clark  
Special to The Tribune-Star

when boys played pool in Ehrenhardt's saloon on East Main Street. Youths were prone to standing near the outside stairway of Adams Photograph Gallery in the evenings and insulting the ladies passing by.

Labor problems a century ago involved the police when strike action led to violence. Mayor Kolsem requested three patrolmen to go to the Nail Works in 1885 to prevent bloodshed.

About midnight one night two shots were fired through a rear window of Alex Sandison's home on South Third between Walnut and Poplar streets. It turned out that Mr. Moffett, druggist at Third and Poplar, fired at two burglars trying to break in his store. It is hoped he was more accurate in filling prescriptions than he was in defending his property!

In those days justice was swift. When a wife complained of her husband's drunkenness, he was taken to Squire Goldman's office, fined for drunkenness and placed on the rock pile. If a man insulted a lady, he was taken to the station, reprimanded and released.

A century ago there was no garbage collection, and the police

department received frequent complaints of garbage being thrown in the wrong place.

Citizens had loads of coal dumped in the middle of sidewalks, and tied their horses and buggies to trees.

Butchers cut meat in front of their shops. A vicious bull was let loose near Curtis Gilbert's house. Of course, he complained.

The old Registers provide a complete census of local prostitutes if one needed to be compiled. Patrolmen were required to keep track of the whereabouts of each one in his district and to report if she left town or moved to another madam's establishment.

Strange things happened in Terre Haute a century ago. One night somebody threw 20 yards of carpet into the front yard of William E. Nelson, 618 Ohio St. Wooden foot bridges over culverts and sidewalks were always in disrepair. One man fell through a cellar hole in front of Sykes Hat Store on Main Street and broke his leg. Dr. G. W. Crapo ordered him taken to St. Anthony's Hospital.

About the same time, Frank Stone rammed his horse and buggy into a street car at Sixth and Chestnut. There was a fire in Happy Alley between Oak and Swan streets, and someone stole a thousand shingles from the site of the new skating rink.

Patrolmen were ordered to blow their whistles every half hour after 11 p.m., arrest all tramps found in the city limits, and bring in to the station all suspicious persons found on the streets after midnight.

Even as now, guilty husbands told tall tales. One man told of being robbed of \$14 at the Early House wagon yard. Sgt. Dwyer

found out he was not robbed. He had spent his money in Mrs. Campbell's house of ill fame.

Crimes listed in the old police blotters compare favorably with present-day crimes. Means of transportation were favorite theft items. Instead of stealing horse and wagons, car theft is quite common.

Family disturbances, wife-beatings and child abuse are again in the news, even though divorce is more common instead of "til death do us part." Alcoholism, prostitution, petty larceny, peddling without a license and forgery were much more common than murder. In fact, there were very few murders committed here a century ago.

Today we have frequent bombings, but in 1885 it was a rare occurrence. On the morning of Dec. 15, when the City Treasurer opened his vault, an explosion occurred severely burning Deputy City Treasurer James Bell on the hands and face, and injuring City Clerk George Davis on the legs. The offices were demolished, all the windows in the building were shattered and the vault was destroyed. Damage was estimated at \$1,500.

The lost and found department was quite active. Mrs. John Crapo reported as missing her 4-month-old pup, half coach and half bird dog, black and white, spotted face, with a white belly and throat. Patrolman Odell was assigned to that case.

Patrolman Early found W. A. McFarland's setter pup with the hole in his right ear. Other patrolmen mentioned in the Desk Register were Bishop, Murphy, Goodpasture, Stoecker, Butler, Overholtz and Lewis.



# attraction in 1896

## Keller murder case big

*Clark, Dorothy + Crime + Criminals (W)*

Ts MAY 4 1986

The Keller murder case venued from Parke County attracted more attention in 1896 than any other criminal case ever tried in Vigo County.

The Terre Haute Gazette printed a small souvenir edition complete with pictures of the murder scene, the three people on trial, the murder victim, their houses and the road between, the Vigo County courthouse, the jury members, the attorneys and a detailed map of the murder scene.

Daniel Keller, his wife Nannie, and his sister Maggie, all living in the same house in Parke County, were charged with murdering Clara Shanks, age 18, on the afternoon of July 6, 1895. The girl disappeared from her home at 1 p.m. and her body was found the next morning in the pond at Wolf Creek Falls, two miles west of Wallace.

The prosecution's theory was that the girl was murdered at Keller's house Saturday afternoon, the body kept concealed until dark and then carried and dumped in the creek. The motive of the alleged crime was supposed to have been jealousy on the part of Mrs. Keller.

Clara was in the habit of going to Keller's house for water, and

### Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark  
Special to The Tribune-Star

Friday evening reported to her mother that Mrs. Keller seemed cold to her and unfriendly. Mrs. Shanks went over to the Keller house to inquire what was the matter. Mrs. Keller told her that Clara was too intimate with Dan Keller.

Mrs. Shanks returned home and questioned her daughter, who indignantly denied the charge. The next morning mother and daughter called on the Kellers and demanded a retraction of what they termed base slander. Mrs. Keller refused and called on her husband to back her up, but he remained silent. Later on Friday, Mr. and

Mrs. Keller called on Mrs. Shanks and this time he admitted that what his wife said was true.

Some hot words were exchanged and Mrs. Keller said if Clara ever came to their house again she would "smash her head." Clara wasn't home when this took place, but when her mother told her about it, she again claimed the charge as malicious and false.

After the noon meal, Clara was silent, ate very little and left the table without a word. When she didn't come back in a short time, the family looked for her, but couldn't find her.

By the next morning, the family was alarmed and the search was renewed. Fearing suicide, Mrs. Shanks sent her son Dan to the pond to search for the body. He waded in and soon found the body. Leaving the corpse in the water, he ran home to tell his parents and grabbed a shotgun.

Going to Keller's house, he fired one shot at Keller but didn't hit him. Clara's body was removed from the pool and hauled home in a wagon. It was presumed a suicide. The doctors who viewed the body saw no marks of external violence.

The coroner's verdict was

suicide, but people were not satisfied. Two weeks later the body was exhumed and an autopsy performed. The verdict of five doctors was that the girl died of violence. Many marks were found and the physicians claimed that her skull was fractured by a blow on the head. Fingerprints were found on her throat and her neck was broken.

The arrest of the Kellers followed the autopsy and a subscription was raised to employ legal counsel. Keller's house was searched, and sections of a red-stained floor were sawed out and taken for evidence. These together with blocks cut from his fence and a piece of cloth cut from a pair of his stained trousers were sent to an Indianapolis chemist for analysis. On Aug. 10, the Kellers were given a preliminary hearing at Annapolis and jailed to await the grand jury, which charged murder in the first degree.

The state was represented by Daniel Sims of Covington, Howard Maxwell, prosecuting attorney of Parke and Vermillion counties, S. D. Puett of Rockville, and prosecutor S. M. Huston of Terre Haute. The prisoners were represented by Charles McCabe of

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Vigo County Public Library



Covington and Lamb & Beasley of Terre Haute.

The state rested its case Feb. 7, 1896, the evidence judged purely circumstantial. Expert testimony of Dr. Geis showed the blood stains to be human. Dr. VanCleave was the only one of the doctors who testified that it was impossible for the girl to have committed suicide.

Serving on the jury were Nathan Wallace, Samuel Hathorn, Robert J. Fagg, Fred Sankey, Moody Ripley, William Ellsworth, Cassius C. Carr, Albert Barbour, Amos Hixson, Thomas E. Woolen, John N. Rhyan and Frederick Vermillion.

J. Stuart Jordon was the court page; Lena A. Joyce, reporter; George Ira Kisner, bailiff; D. N. Taylor, judge.

John T. Beasley and John T. Lamb gave their closing speeches, the judge instructed the jury and they left the courtroom. It was reported later that the first ballot was 6-6, then slowly, one by one, the jurors changed their minds until they voted for acquittal, not guilty after seven months in jail.

The body was found July 7, the three were arrested Aug. 7 and finally found not guilty on Feb. 7, 1896.

The packed courtroom went wild and crowded around the Kellers, congratulating them on the verdict. As soon as they could get away from all the well-wishers, they packed their bags and walked to the corner of Third and Main Streets where they caught a street car to the railroad depot.

Here they bought tickets on the South Bend express train for Rockville. There was much speculation as to whether or not the Kellers would sue their accusers for damages, etc.

Looking back from the vantage point of 90 years, it would seem the case was tried in the newspapers. Reading the daily verbatim reports of the court proceedings, and the slanted editorial comments, present-day readers would be surprised at the not guilty verdict.

The huge crowds of spectators each day certainly were not in sympathy with the bereaved Shanks family. The battle was really between the doctors themselves, between the attorneys and various county officers, and between the doctors and the lawyers. We can only hope that justice prevailed in the most sensational murder trial ever conducted in the Vigo County courthouse.



hanged

# The day murderer Dyas was

Nov 23 1986

This winter when Strawberry Hill is barricaded from traffic to afford the children of the area with an exciting, now-covered hill to coast down, they probably will not be aware of the fact that this historic site was once the place where pioneers hunted for squirrels, where happy families gathered wild strawberries, where later beautiful homes were built, and where the first hanging in Vigo County occurred 142 years ago.

This public execution took place July 5, 1844, at the foot of Strawberry Hill, the location now known as the intersection of Seabury Avenue and South Center Street.

A man named Henry Dyas had brutally murdered George Brock, an Illinois drover and cattle buyer, in Mevins Township, Vigo County, in the fall of 1843. The scene of the unprovoked and brutal crime was the log cabin of a notorious old woman, Mrs. Brady, and her daughter who was as disreputable as her mother.

The y lived near the old Brooks Mill on Otter Creek, three-fourths of a mile west of Milton, a station on the Indianapolis and St. Louis Railroad, about a mile north of

## Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark  
Special to The Tribune-Star

Grant Station, where the Chicago and Eastern Illinois coal branch crossed the I. & St. L. Railroad.

The place was sparsely settled, and with no near neighbors to complain, the old woman sold whiskey. Here the hard characters met to drink, dance and carouse to their hearts' content. It was considered a "low resort" even in those early days. Dyas was a most welcome visitor and stood high in the women's favor. He had a family, but preferred his drinking buddies.

One Saturday evening in October 1843, the old woman quarreled with George Brock, who had been

stopping at the house, about a whiskey bill she had presented. It was reported later that she used violent language and threatened his life.

The next morning, Sunday, Brock saddled his horse in the barn, getting ready to leave for his home, and returned to the house to tell the occupants goodbye. This cost him his life. While Brock was seated before the fireplace talking with Alexander Mars, Dyas came in the door and struck him in the back of the head with the sharp blade of an axe before Brock was even aware of his presence.

Mars saw Dyas as he entered the room, but didn't realize his murderous intent. When he saw the fatal blow which killed Brock, Mars jumped up and ran for his life, expecting to be attacked also.

When Brock's body was found, it was observed that he had been struck three times with the axe, one blow severing the spinal column. Any one of the blows would have been fatal.

Dyas fled to the woods, and Mrs. Brady gave the alarm. Soon people in the house gathered to see what was the matter. As Mars fled from the house, she had stopped him, trying to assure him he was in no

danger, but he was too terrified to listen.

Mars concealed himself in a hollow tree and from this hiding place saw Mrs. Brady come out of the house, go to a corner of the rail fence and change the dress she wore, which was covered with blood, to a clean one. She then gave the alarm.

Dyas hid in the woods, but a guard was placed around his house, and during the night he was captured as he attempted to sneak in.

This horrible murder was a year's excitement to the surrounding countryside. As late as 1900, white-haired old men would tell about witnessing the hanging of Dyas, although they were only small children at the time. Many people reckoned time and events from "the day Dyas was hung."

Old Alec Mars lived many years near old Fort Harrison. He was reluctant to talk about witnessing the bloody murder except when he was "in his cups." Then he would go into great detail, always ending with the statement, "where upon his testimony a wretch was executed." A little dried-up man,

Vigo County Public Library  
Community Affairs File

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE



Mars was frequently bedeviled by a crowd of jeering boys whenever he was seen in town.

Another witness at the trial, Asa Fenton, became insane during the court proceedings and remained so until his death many years later. Dyas was convicted of the crime June 4, 1844, in Vigo Circuit Court.

Old Mrs. Brady and her daughter were believed to have hired Dyas to commit the murder. They left Indiana soon after, or about the time of the execution. Rumors came back that she had been mobbed and killed or hanged in a southern state.

Since this was the first death penalty ever inflicted in Vigo County, it was necessary to choose the place of execution where the public could attend. The foot of Strawberry Hill was like a great natural amphitheater for the gruesome show.

The crowd that gathered to make a holiday of it was estimated in the thousands. They came from all the surrounding area, even some from considerable distances in Illinois; many came 50 miles or more.

It was a memorable day. Possibly Dyas never realized that he was of any importance in this world until the day he was ordered to leave it.

Seated on his coffin in an open two-horse wagon, Dyas rode from the jail on the corner of Third and Ohio Streets to the gallows. He was dressed in his white shroud and headed the great procession to the execution site.

Sheriff William Ray and his deputy, Marvin M. Hickox, fixed the rope around the condemned man's neck. The gallows trap was tripped by the sheriff, but instead of breaking the man's neck, the knot slipped, and he was strangled to death. Many believed his brutal crime deserved this inhuman punishment.

Strawberry Hill is frequently mentioned in local history. George C. Duy, one of the early cashiers at the old State Bank on Ohio Street (now known as Memorial Hall) was married to the only daughter of Judge Samuel B. Gookins, his partner in a law firm.

Their home was on Strawberry Hill, "a beautiful piece of landscape, located in the then southern suburbs of Terre Haute, covered with forest trees, and a right royal and hospitable home it was, and the scene of many a brilliant function. It was afterwards the property of Coates College."



label in 1913

# They were looking for union

Ts MAY 17 1987

First of two parts

Terre Haute was recovering from the Easter Sunday tornado and flood in 1913 when another tragedy struck at the ongoing labor trouble at Ehrmann's Overall Factory, 929 Wabash Ave.

The business, one of the largest manufacturers of workmen's clothing in the midwest, with traveling salesmen selling the products all over the country, was owned by Emil E. Ehrmann and Frederick A. Reckert Sr.

The building was owned jointly by Emil E. Ehrmann, president, and his brother, Albert D. Ehrmann, an art student in Paris, France. From a humble beginning, the firm had prospered until a reduction in wages and a change in the making of garments that had resulted in cutting the sewing girls' wages had caused a walkout of the labor force.

Various union organizations tried to settle the problem with the company but without success. The garment workers' organization, the local Central Labor Union, state organizations of labor groups, all responded liberally with financial aid. A special tax of 10 cents per capita weekly was levied on Terre Haute locals for the support of the striking girls. The Humane Society was unsuccessful in its in-

## Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark  
*Special to The Tribune-Star*

tercession, as was the 11th District United Mine Workers.

Because there were numerous other strikes of garment workers throughout the country, a national officer had not been in Terre Haute to help. Meier Schwartz, international organizer, came to town, and it was thought for a time an agreement was reached. When he left the city another garment factory in town was in the process of unionizing.

Strike breakers and non-union labor had been hired to keep the plant running, and this caused trouble. Charges of strikers assaulting the "scabs" were dismissed,

however.

This situation had been going on for five months since the strike was called Jan. 8 when serious trouble erupted. It seems that on May 26 one of the strikers, Cora Donham, age 20, was slapped by Max Howard, husband of one of the non-union workers, when he went to the plant to escort his wife home.

Tuesday evening Donham let it be known that she was going to slap back the man who had knocked her down. When the Howard couple started to come out the front door of the factory, they were accompanied by Reckert, part owner, general manager and brother-in-law of Ehrmann.

Words were exchanged. When it appeared Howard would strike Donham again, a passerby, Edward S. Wade, a 30-year-old, unemployed teamster, ran up to the group and is quoted as saying, "Strike a man, not a woman," as he shoved Howard away.

At this moment Ehrmann pushed open the factory door. Seeing Wade with his arm drawn back to hit Howard, he fired his gun at close range, striking Wade in the chest. Wade fell to the ground dying.

Reckert, Ehrmann, Howard and his wife, along with several workers who witnessed

Vigo County Public Library

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE



the murder, fled back into the building. The door was shut and locked.

The gun shot was heard by several policemen who were on streetcars near Ninth and Main streets arriving for the 6 o'clock shift. They beat their way through the gathering crowd and demanded admittance to the factory. Reckert and Ehrmann were standing inside.

According to officers, Reckert had a 32-caliber Smith & Wesson revolver in his hand which he turned over to police. Sgt. Harry Clancy found one shell still smoking and arrested Reckert. It was confirmed later by witnesses that Ehrmann fired the shot and handed his gun to Reckert later.

In the meantime, Patrolman Merring, Sgt. James Allen, Detective James LeForge, Traffic Officer Jesse Feithoff and a number of other patrolmen carried Wade to the drugstore at Ninth and Wabash and got the crowd under control.

Apparently still conscious but unable to speak because of blood from his chest wound, Wade tried to speak before he died. The police auto was called, and waited at the curb for the arrival of Coroner F. H. Jett. Either the sight of the murder weapon or the sight of Reckert being placed in the police auto set off the crowd, and violence was ready to break out.

The police auto sped through the crowd to the jail, and returned for Ehrmann, the actual murderer. However, he maintained he shot in self-defense. Deputies at the jail made preparations for an all-night vigil in case mob violence developed.

Fred A. Reckert Jr., assistant factory manager, and Max Ehrmann, attorney and brother of the accused, were still in the building. Detective Fred Armstrong and Patrolman Jack Smock were detailed to take them to police headquarters for questioning. Ehrmann hired Albin as a body guard.

Day-shift policemen were called back to work as special guards for the downtown area, but no trouble occurred. Reckert Jr. opened the factory for workers as usual at 8 a.m. Striking pickets were absent, and the murder investigation proceeded.

Labor unions met that night to pass resolutions and vote funds for prosecution of the case. Most unions voted to suspend work during Wade's funeral. His fellow teamsters in Union No. 144 met in Germania Hall. A popular member of the union, he had been out of work for some time due to the lockout of the transfer companies. He had been doing odd jobs for the teamsters' transfer company.



murder case?

# What ever happened in Ehrmann

Is MAY 24 1987

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This column continues the account of strike violence at the Ehrmann Overall Factory, 929 Wabash Ave., in May 1913.

An innocent passerby, Edward S. Wade, was fatally shot as he tried to intervene when a non-union worker's husband, Max Howard, was involved in striking Cora Donham, head of the local garment workers union. The scenario on May 28 goes like this:

A special grand jury was called by Judge Fortune to hear the murder indictment against Emil E. Ehrmann and Frederick A. Reckert Sr., still in jail without bail. Reckert was found not to be an accessory in the shooting. An ignoramus was found for him, and he was released from custody to return to his home at Fifth and Park streets.

On May 30, the grand jury charged Ehrmann with murder in the first degree. Many of the jurors had known Emil since boyhood. Several had had business dealings with him, and they all felt the weight of their responsibility to

## Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark  
*Special to The Tribune-Star*

rule. Werneke was the prosecutor. The murder victim, Edward S. Wade, and his wife, Mary B., and their 10-year-old daughter, Gertrude, lived at 41 S. 11th St. He supported his family on \$13.50 a week.

Ehrmann was the second son of Max Ehrmann Sr., and his wife, Margaret. Max Sr., a native of Germany, came to Terre Haute in 1856. There were four sons: Charles, a meat packer; Emil E., a manufacturer; Albert D., then a student; and Max Jr., an attorney,

poet and writer; and one daughter, the wife of Frederick Reckert Sr.

For 25 years Max Ehrmann Sr. was employed by the Vandalia Railroad as a master mechanic, and then in the coal business until his death in 1893. The family lived first in a small brick house on North Fourth Street just south of Tippecanoe Street, later moving to North Center between the two railroads.

In addition to the downtown factory, Emil E. and his brother Albert also owned the building at Sixth and Wabash, then occupied by Kleeman Dry Goods, which they had purchased several years previously from the late W. R. McKeen.

Emil also owned the site of Fort Harrison which the Terre Haute Park Commissioners were seeking to condemn for park purposes for the city. He was asking \$55,000 for the acreage, but the park officials considered the price too high.

When Ehrmann purchased the historic site, he rebuilt the old house that stood there. Many timbers of the old fort were used in

the reconstruction of the building. He occupied it as a summer home for several years and frequently entertained there.

At the time the monument was dedicated at the site on the 100th anniversary of the battle of Fort Harrison in 1912, the house and grounds were thrown open to the public for the celebration.

Represented by attorneys Walker and Blankenbaker, Mrs. Wade brought suit for \$10,000 against Ehrmann for the murder of her husband, and a temporary restraining order to prevent him from transferring the Fort Harrison property as a means of defeating her suit. Superior Court Judge Cox granted the order.

Union labor of Terre Haute and several surrounding towns turned out in force for the funeral on June 1 to pay tribute to the memory of Edward S. Wade, who had been killed the previous Tuesday. The parade probably was the longest ever staged in the city, estimated at from 5,000 to 7,000. The procession was orderly and no trouble was experienced during the

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

Vigo County Public Library

Community Affairs File



day.

The procession moved east on Wabash from Third to 11th Street, where it turned south and passed the house of the deceased. It then counter-marched to Wabash and east to 20th Street, where it waited for the funeral cortege to pass through the open ranks of mourners. was very brief at the home because of the condition of Mrs. Wade, who was reported on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The Rev. E. G. Roesner, pastor of the German Methodist Church, conducted the funeral with music by a quartet. The home was completely filled with flowers, and they had to be taken to the cemetery in a wagon.

Pallbearers, all members of the Teamsters' Union, were E. W. Crabb, Jacob Reder, H. D. Roseman, L. Bogard, O. Demick and Clifford Brooks. The Musicians' Union band played while the casket was taken to the hearse. This joint band, composed of three concert bands (59 pieces) of the city, was one of the largest ever to perform in Terre Haute. Coal

miners from the area had one of the largest delegations in the funeral procession. The city was thanked for cleaning and sprinkling the streets for the benefit of the marchers.

Readers may well ask what happened in this murder case? There were numerous delays, the trial was venued to other counties, and there were still more delays. Was Ehrmann ever convicted by a court for his crime? Was he sentenced? Wade's sister believed he never was held accountable for this crime. His wife and daughter are dead. If anyone has knowledge of the outcome, this writer would like to hear from them.

It is known that Emil E. Ehrmann died at his home in Jacksonville, Fla., which he had established in 1910. In the summer months his residence was at the Great Northern Hotel. At his death in 1946 he was brought to Highland Lawn Cemetery for burial with his wife, Imogene. His brother Albert, and his wife, Henrietta, and Max Jr. and his wife, Bertha, also are buried there.



# detective's life

## 1919 gang shootout claimed

Terre Haute was suffering from a severe cold wave and a crime wave during the winter of 1918-1919 at the end of World War I. Crime was on the increase all over the nation due to the restlessness and aftermath of the recent war.

Local residents were plagued by streetcar holdups, house burglaries and daring "muggings" (a new word then) on city streets. During one three-day period there were two holdups, three diamond robberies and a number of lesser thefts.

On Jan. 2, Police Chief Beattie announced the new police assignments. Detectives William Baker and Matthew Dorley would work together, as would McMillan and Scott.

The notorious "Smith Gang" had been under suspicion for some time. Their headquarters was a house of ill fame at 219 Eagle St., owned and operated by May Smith.

### Historically speaking



Clark retired as The Tribune-Star women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column for 30 years. She is Vigo County Historian.

**By Dorothy J. Clark**  
*Special to The Tribune-Star*

Her brother, Raymond, also known as "Buck" or "Curly" Smith, already was a hardened criminal at the age of 21 years.

Other members of this gang were Albert Willcutt and Hilary Litton, and their female accomplices Gertrude Minton, a dope addict, and Lillie Freeman. Their hangout had been under police surveillance

for some time.

On the night of Jan. 16, 1919, the O'Connell Carriage Shop at 318 Cherry St. was robbed by three armed men. The cashier, William J. O'Connell, gave a detailed description of the bandits which fit the description of the three suspects. Their hideout in the old redlight district was put under close watch.

The following night, shortly after 10, the three men were observed leaving the house and walking west on Eagle Street. The two detectives assigned to the case, Baker and Dorley, followed them to Second Street where they turned and walked back to Sixth Street toward the Vandalia Railroad crossing.

Word had been received earlier that the suspects were planning to skip town by hopping a freight train as it passed through the city. The detectives caught a streetcar and arrived at the railroad crossing

ahead of the bandits.

As the trio approached the flagman's shanty where Dorley and Baker were concealed, the detectives jumped out from behind the building and ordered the men to throw up their hands. Instead of complying, Buck Smith grabbed Dorley and at the same time drew a revolver and began shooting.

Detective Baker covered Willcutt and Litton with his revolver, forcing them to stand with their hands up. Meanwhile, Dorley and Smith were each firing revolvers as the opportunity presented itself. Baker was unable to assist Dorley. Each time he took his eyes off the two he was holding at gunpoint, they would reach for their guns.

Finally, Baker worked around close enough to use his revolver without endangering Dorley, still locked in a deadly struggle with Smith. Baker fired three shots, two hit Smith and he fell to the ground mortally wounded.

Vigo County Public Library

Community Affairs File

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE



Detective Dorley knew he was shot, but didn't believe his wounds were serious. He managed to stay on his feet and aided in taking the men to jail.

A passing motorist, William Fread, son of the grocer at Seventh and Lafayette, took Litton and Willcutt to the police station, while the police ambulance removed Smith to St. Anthony's Hospital.

As Detective Dorley was wheeled into the operating room for emergency surgery, Smith managed to raise himself up on his stretcher. His dying words as he yelled to the attendant were: "Patch me up quick so I can go out and kill another cop!"

Surgeons found that Matthew Dorley was in serious condition. Shot three times, one bullet struck him in the mouth and jaw, another across his forehead, and the third ranged upward piercing his upper abdomen.

For a week after the shooting,

daily bulletins were issued by the hospital. At one time it was felt that he might recover, but he died Jan. 23.

The entire city was in mourning. The flag at city hall was flown at half-mast, and the front of the building was draped in black.

Born in Lancaster, Pa., in 1866, Matthew A. Dorley was married to Clara Geistwite by the Mayor of Philadelphia. They came to Terre Haute in 1894. Before he became a police officer he worked at the Terre Haute Iron & Nail Works.

He started as patrolman, was soon promoted to desk sergeant, to police chief, and then served as detective for a number of years. Mayor Gerhardt sent Detective Capt. Dorley and William Nicholson (the mayor's son-in-law) to St. Louis to study Bertillon measurements and fingerprinting. Dorley was the first police official to establish the fingerprint system in Terre Haute.



## Valley heritage

# Boys in blue had strict regulations

Nearly a century ago, the Moore & Langen Printing Co. published a manual of "rules and regulations governing the Metropolitan Police Force of the City of Terre Haute."

Serving on the Board of Police Commissioners were Orville E. Raidy, president; Sydney B. Davis, John L. Barbazette and W.E. Dwyer, secretary. Charles E. Hyland was superintendent of police.

Rules governing police officers were very strict. Any member of the force who became intoxicated, or who visited houses of ill-fame, saloons or other resorts, except when in the discharge of public duty, would be promptly dismissed from the force.

The use of profane, vulgar or abusive language also was cause for dismissal, along with the "use of intoxicating liquor, smoking on duty or being treated by a saloon keeper or other citizen while on duty."

Patrolmen were strictly forbidden to idle or loiter about saloons, houses of ill-fame, or other public places at any time. While on duty they were required to "continually patrol their beat."

Rookies were advised to "not play the loafer by lounging in doorways or on corners, or by leaning against lamp posts, but patrol your beat continually."

Every morning, patrolmen were required to report all vacant houses and persons moving in and out of their beat. They had to report all dangerous ob-

### Historically speaking



Clark retired as the Tribune-Star's women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column since 1956. She is Vigo County historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark  
*Special to the Tribune-Star*

structions to streets, alleys and sidewalks, all electric street lamps not lighted during the night, and all contagious diseases.

In winter, the patrolmen wore "a single-breasted military frock coat, buttoned close up to the chin, with a belt for the mace." In the Gay Nineties this referred to a wooden billy-club, not an aerosol can of eye-burning chemical.

In summer, patrolmen wore a sack coat of lighter weight fabric with the star conspicuously displayed on the left breast of the coat. On duty, he carried a revolver, whistle and club, and was not permitted to carry umbrella or walking stick.

When asked by a citizen or stranger, the patrolman was required to give his name and number. He could have a political opinion and vote for any candidate he chose, but could not belong to or participate in any political club, nor solicit for or con-

tribute to any campaign.

Police officers were required to be U.S. citizens, qualified voters of Terre Haute, not under 21 nor over 40 years of age, be able to read and write English intelligently, not less than 5 feet 10 inches in sock feet, not less than 150 pounds nor more than 225 pounds in weight, sound in body and health, vigorous and of unquestionable courage, temperate, industrious, peaceable, courteous and of good moral character.

The signals were one long and two short whistles for the sergeant's call; two short whistles, repeated, for a call for help.

Before the turn of the century, police officers driving the patrol wagon on day duty worked from 1 a.m. to 7 p.m. Each officer was required to "keep the wagons and harness clean and in good condition. He should also keep the barn in order."

The night driver worked 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. and was required to feed the horses before going off duty. Each driver was held "strictly accountable for the care and cleanliness of the horse driven by him."

In case of a city fire, the paddy wagon was to report to the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department and take orders from him. Ropes were to be carried in the wagon at all times.

In 1904, the Police Manual was printed by Hebb Press, 20-22 S. Fifth St. At this time,

Edwin J. Bidamin was mayor. Serving on the Board of Public Safety were Thatcher A. Parker, president; Norman Bindley, secretary; and Horace Tune. George M. Lints was superintendent of police, and Robert R. Harrold, clerk.

Under the Acts of 1899, the police department was under the charge of a board of three commissioners appointed by the mayor, with only two of his political faith. This board had the care, management, supervision and exclusive control of all matters relative to the fire and police force, fire alarm telegraphs, erection of fire escapes, inspection of buildings and boilers, market places and food sold therein, pounds and prisons.

This board had the power to purchase supplies, make all department repairs, hire and fire, set policy and, in general, carry much weight. Their salary was \$400 per year.

The list of City Ordinances filled six pages and included many completely out of date in 1993, namely: washing buggies in streets, bathing in the river, keeping more than two barrels of coal oil in the city, and leaving teams of horses parked in front of engine houses.

There were dire consequences planned for those citizens who failed to keep their pig pens clean, or erected soap factories within two miles of the city nearly a century ago.



# Vandals wasted old documents

Following the death of Mrs. Franklin Sage, her home on South Center Street stood empty for some time. Vandals entered the house and threw quantities of written material out onto the lawn. Most of the papers were gathered by pushcart and sold for wastepaper and lost to history.

Mrs. Sage, the former Jessica Cliver, had been the secretary of Col. William E. McLean, and later married him. As his widow, she married Sage.

Most of the papers scattered over the lawn were historical documents from Col. McLean's files, and would have furnished evidence of his life, Civil War service, and the many business affairs in which he was interested including the Wabash & Erie Canal.

Other instances of irreplaceable records and correspondence that might have been saved have been reported only after they were unthinkingly thrown away or burned.

One instance occurred where a building was being razed in Terre Haute. A workman found an old newspaper that resulted in a local pioneer family learning more about their ancestors.

The 1873 copy of the Terre Haute Daily Express was given

## Historically speaking



Clark retired as the Tribune-Star's women's editor in 1980. She has written a local history column since 1956. She is Vigo County historian.

By Dorothy J. Clark  
Special to the Tribune-Star

to D.F. Pflaging Sr. He enjoyed reading the account of the 55th wedding anniversary celebration of his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pflaging.

Their farm was at what is now 15th and Locust streets, and the farm house was on the corner of 15th and Elm. The last lots carved from this farm were sold to the late Dr. Iverson Bell at 16th and Elm.

According to the 1873 newspaper, the Henry Pflagings resided "on 14th street near Beigler's Gardens." They were reported to be "strong and full of vigor — able to perform regularly more manual labor than almost any pair of young people in the Wabash Valley."

Born in Hesse Cassle in 1797,

the Pflagings were married in 1818. They emigrated to America in 1831, crossing the Atlantic Ocean with five children and a former townsman, George Habermeyer. They settled in Maryland where they made some money by buying a farm and selling it 100 percent on the cost.

The year 1836 was remembered for its hard times. The Pflagings left Maryland and came to Vigo County, settling in the river bottoms farm of Dr. Blake, about five miles from Terre Haute in Otter Creek Township. They lived here for several years.

Several children were born to them, and they prospered in every thing except health. Chills and fevers tormented them. Their children were frequently ill.

Mrs. Pflaging suddenly became ill, and to all appearances died. She was pronounced dead, but her husband would not believe it, and stayed by her bedside until she regained consciousness.

For the next 30 years they both took Moffet's Pills daily, their only medication. This hardy woman, it was reported in 1873, rose each morning at 5 a.m. She milked the cows, built

the fires, did the chores and called her household to breakfast at 6 a.m.

After breakfast she helped her husband take produce to the market from their eight-acre vegetable garden. Each year she made and sold hundreds of gallons of ketchup and piccalilly to the oyster saloons and eating houses of Terre Haute. Her husband delivered these products, and was known by everyone as "a jolly fellow contented with his life."

The Pflagings regularly read a number of prominent newspapers and kept informed of current events.

The 1876 Terre Haute City Directory lists Christian Pflaging, gardener, as residing at the southeast corner of 15th and Locust streets, the present location of Herz-Rose Park of 5.18 acres.

Land owners in the area of the park can find former ownership of the Pflaging family in their deed abstracts. They came to Vigo County in 1836, and moved into town following the Civil War in 1865, over 126 years ago.

Descendants of this early family spell the name with an "e" and are found listed in city directories and telephone books.

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Community Affairs File

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE



Gangs

1994

# County files first charge under new anti-gang law

TS NOV 10 1994  
James Bell was  
initiating teens  
into gang, cops say

By John Wright  
and Rachel Wedding

Tribune-Star

Eight Terre Haute boys were branded on their arms with a coat hanger shaped like a spade as part of their initiation into an organization known as the Spades, police say.

Their alleged leader, James H. Bell, 26, was charged Wednesday in the county's first-ever case filed for criminal gang activity, a class-D felony. He is

in the Vigo County Jail under \$50,000 bail.

Ten boys, at least six of whom range in age from 14 to 17, gave statements to police since Oct. 24 about their involvement in the Spades, police wrote in a probable cause document filed in Vigo County Court Division 5.

While the Spades is not accused of any criminal activity as a group, Bell is charged under an Indiana law that says the defendant "requires as a condition of membership [into a



WATTS

gang], the commission of a felony or a battery."

"The battery is the branding," said Vigo County Prosecutor Phillip I. Adler. Prospects into the Spades were also punched in the chest as part of initiation rites, the boys told police.

Eight boys said they were branded by another member of the group at Bell's residence at 2235 Fourth Ave., and four said Bell was the leader of the Spades, police said.

"We think we have a pretty good case," said Terre Haute Police Chief Ray Watts. "We had plenty enough probable cause to get this warrant and we hope that it will send a good message

See "Gang," Page A4

Community Affairs File

REFERENCE  
DO NOT CIRCULATE

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA



## Gangs • Continued from Page A1

to the teen-agers out there that if you're going to join a gang and go through initiation and we can prove it, we're going to try to get the leader and everyone else."

But while police and the Vigo County prosecutor are calling the Spades a gang, Bell and others say it was no more than a nonviolent group of boys with no criminal intent.

"This wasn't no gang," Bell said Wednesday, before entering the courtroom for a hearing before Judge Barbara L. Brugnaux. "It was a just a group of people who got together and came over to my house and I took care of them. I made sure they didn't drink alcohol or do drugs," he said.

Police say Bell was more than just a substitute big brother. The probable cause document states

a 16-year-old member said Bell bought alcohol for him. And a 17-year-old saw Bell buy booze for other members, the affidavit states.

Bell and his brother, Fred Bell, 24, said the boys came to James Bell for protection, because they were being harassed by the Fourteenth Street Gang.

A Terre Haute woman who attended Bell's court appearance, Amy Love, said the same. "My brother was in the gang [the Spades]. They figured if they got James involved, the other gang would leave them alone because James knew [Fourteenth Street gang members]."

Watts declined comment about a feud between rival gangs. He did say another gang-related arrest is possible.

Adler said, "I will be the first to admit this is not a notorious gang, but the point is, when you have initiations like this that are required, it is a gang and we're not going to tolerate it."

Judge Brugnaux found probable cause for Bell's arrest. Bell said he hired attorney Christopher A. Gambill. Bell's next day in court will be Monday.

Outside the courtroom, Fred Bell said police arrested his brother because they have a vendetta against his family. Oldest of the brothers, Graylon Bell, 28, is doing eight years in prison for rape and other crimes.

Watts discounted the claim, saying James Bell "would have his day in court."